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# Dehumanization in the Works of Alain Robbe-Grillet.

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DEHUMANIZATION IN THE WORKS OF  
ALAIN ROBBE-GRILLET

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
Louisiana State University and  
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in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of Foreign Languages

by

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## ABSTRACT

Dehumanization is a high frequency term in today's vocabulary. This word may be applied to almost any phenomena in the twentieth century. In view of some critic's attacks of Alain Robbe-Grillet's novels for what they call dehumanization or dehumanized description, this term has been designated for study as it concerns itself with Robbe-Grillet's works.

An investigation of the term shows that the same word has two parallel meanings, both with roots in the nineteenth century. There is a sociological concept of dehumanization to be found in the nineteenth century novelists as well as an aesthetic dehumanization to be seen in the Parnassian poetry and the novelistic theories of Flaubert.

In 1925, José Ortega y Gasset used the term dehumanization in La deshumanización del arte. Chapter I of this dissertation treats similar theories in La deshumanización del arte and Robbe-Grillet's major critical work, Pour un nouveau roman. Chapter II considers dehumanization in Robbe-Grillet's total works. A major concern of some critics is the fact that Robbe-Grillet's characters are so obviously not life-like. Thus, Chapter III treats dehumanization of characters. Chapter IV treats a more complex concept of aesthetic dehumanization in the disappearance of the narrator and author. This concept is similar to Brechtian "distanciation". The last chapter treats



Robbe-Grillet's latest novel at the time of the writing of this dissertation.

This novel, Projet pour une révolution à New York marks the culmination in the concept of dehumanization as it manifests itself in Alain Robbe-Grillet's novels.

## INTRODUCTION

Dehumanization is a term used very frequently today to denote man's loss of identity by his dependance upon machines in our highly developed technological society or by his submersion in the human masses congregated in the cities and suburbs. The term "dehumanization" was first used by José Ortega y Gasset in his work primarily on art criticism, La deshumanización del arte, 1925. This places the work directly within the confines of the twentieth century.

Robbe-Grillet's literary critics in their turn have used the term to describe his works or literary techniques, and some have used it as a basis for an attack upon the writer. The chief critic who initiated this point of view was Roland Barthes, whose term was "chosiste". In his introduction written for Bruce Morrisette's Les romans de Robbe-Grillet, he divides the novelist into Robbe-Grillet number one and Robbe-Grillet number two.

"Entre les deux Robbe-Grillet, le Robbe-Grillet n° 1, 'chosiste', et le Robbe-Grillet n° 2, 'humaniste', entre celui de la toute première critique et celui de Bruce Morrisette, faut-il choisir?"<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Roland Barthes, "Préface", Les romans de Robbe-Grillet (Paris, 1963), p. 13.

Bruce Morrisette in a footnote gives a survey of the critics who concentrated excessively on the dehumanized descriptions in Robbe-Grillet's novels:

Cette fausse interprétation de l'oeuvre de Robbe-Grillet a cours non seulement en France (où ses écrits ont été qualifiés d'"extraits du cadastre," de catalogue pour une exposition des Arts ménagers", etc.), mais aussi à l'étranger. Aux U.S.A. la célèbre revue Time a déclaré à plusieurs reprises que Robbe-Grillet se moquait des personnages et de l'intrigue, aussi bien que des émotions humaines, et qu'il finirait probablement par écrire "un roman sur une chambre meublée, contenant l'idylle du fauteuil avec le divan" (Time, 13 octobre 1958; voir aussi le numéro du 14 décembre 1959). Philip Toynbee et John Wain, en Angleterre ont exprimé les mêmes idées. Un critique très sérieux,<sup>2</sup> Robert Loy, considère Robbe-Grillet comme un pur "chosiste". . .<sup>2</sup>

The term dehumanization applied to a contemporary writer other than Robbe-Grillet occurs in Leonard Pronko's Avant-Garde: the experimental theatre in France. This word appears in his discussion of Ionesco's theatre which Pronko calls dehumanized.

The term "dehumanization" as it has been traced in the preceding discussion has divergent meanings which can all be incorporated in a larger concept of dehumanization. It is the purpose of this introduction to trace the development of the concept of dehumanization as a phenomenon of twentieth century French literature.

Although this word "dehumanized" or "dehumanization" is a twentieth century word, two basic aspects of the term are readily distinguishable from the preceding century. One of the aspects of the term is the concept of dehumanization that was explained at the very beginning of this introduction.

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<sup>2</sup>Bruce Morrisette, Les romans de Robbe-Grillet (Paris, 1963), p. 39.

That is a sociological view of dehumanization in which man's humanness is endangered by advanced technology and the advanced society created from that technology. The other aspect of dehumanization is the aesthetic meaning of the word which is best explained in Ortega's La deshumanización del arte which was previously referred to.

The concept that human qualities can be absent or distorted in man has its roots in much earlier literary periods. Jean-Jacques Rousseau will serve as an excellent starting place for tracing this first sociological aspect of dehumanization. For him the society of his time was corrosive to the human character as he saw it. For Rousseau it was the concept of property that made man other than what he should be. This view of man saw him "dehumanized" because his human qualities and human potential were destroyed by society:

Semblable à la statue de Glaucus, que le temps, la mer et les orages avoient tellement défigurée qu'elle ressembloit moins à un dieu qu'à une bête féroce, l'âme humaine, altérée au sein de la société par mille causes sans cesse renaissantes, par l'acquisition d'une multitude de connoissances et d'erreurs, par les changements arrivés à la constitution des corps, et par le choc continuel des passions, a pour ainsi dire changé d'apparence au point d'être presque méconnoissable; et l'on n'y retrouve plus, au lieu d'un être agissant toujours par des principes certains et invariables, au lieu de cette céleste et majestueuse simplicité dont son auteur l'avoit empreinte, que le difforme contraste de la passion qui étoit raisonneur, et de l'entendement en délire.<sup>3</sup>

In the nineteenth century this concept of man's qualities of humanness being undermined was further developed. A look at the world created by the works of Honoré de Balzac shows a parallel to the scientific discoveries in the

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<sup>3</sup>Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "Discours sur l'origine de l'inégalité parmi les hommes", Oeuvres choisies de Jean-Jacques Rousseau (Paris, 1962), p. 34.

air during this period. In looking at his world, one sees a dehumanized universe. The world of La comédie humaine announces Darwin with a law of survival of the fittest as the operative principle. Many of the characters appear to be less than human; some exhibit animal-like subservience; others show signs of animal-like brutality. Eugenie Grandet appears almost subhuman in her devotion and self-sacrifice to Charles, her cousin. He, in turn, accepts her self-denial and considers himself above gratitude or obligation to her. In Les Illusions perdues, Lucien de Rubempré took almost every cent that his impoverished mother and sister could muster because he considered himself of noble birth and on the way to destined glory and material fortune. The following letter from Lucien's brother-in-law shows the kind of devotion typical of the common domesticated dog:

Mon cher Lucien, tu trouveras ci-joint un effet à quatre vingt-dix jours et à ton ordre de deux cents francs. Tu pourras le négocier chez M. Métivier, marchand de papier, notre correspondant à Paris, rue Serpente. Mon bon Lucien, nous n'avons absolument rien. Ma femme s'est mis à diriger l'imprimerie, et s'acquitte de sa tâche avec un dévouement, une patience, une activité que me font bénir le ciel de m'avoir donné pour femme un pareil ange. Elle même a constaté l'impossibilité ou nous sommes de t'envoyer le plus léger secours.<sup>4</sup>

These simple trusting people are continually exploited by Julien because of his desire for survival in the social world. The world of the journalists where Lucien makes his literary success as an author exemplifies the process of natural selection and survival of the fittest. A similar situation can be seen in the way the "pere Goriot" gives up his revenue in retirement to give his

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<sup>4</sup>Honore de Balzac, Les Illusions perdues (Paris, 1962), p. 214.

daughters more wealth and happiness. In return, they do not even appear at his hour of death. This could be compared to the process in nature in which the mother animal in many species protects the infant even at the cost of her own life and the quick loss of attachment or contact with the parent as the offspring matures. The one adjective most suitable in describing Balzac's world is "animalian", thus dehumanized.

At the end of the nineteenth century came the naturalism of Zola and another version of dehumanized man can be seen. In Zola's novels the majority of the characters are of the working classes and are dominated by the various businesses and industries that employ them. Their human dignity is destroyed and distorted by the city and the poverty that it seems to breed. This is very similar to the plight of the cities in the nineteen sixties and seventies. This imprisonment of the worker can be seen in L'Assomoir where there appeared no possible escape from the dirt, alcohol, sickness and prostitution that the city held for these people. In the works of the Frères Goncourt, the most frequent approach to the human personality or character was to treat it as a case history rather than an individual. They studied the abnormal, the unusual in an effort to be scientific, as in Madame Gervaisais and Germinie Lacerteux. In this respect the Goncourt brothers also depicted a dehumanized man by making their characters types of laboratory animals.

The man of the Frères Goncourt is like an amoeba to be watched carefully under a microscope. This scientific approach of reducing man to objects of case studies is similar to the concept proposed by Zola in his Le Roman expérimental, that a man is a predictable and unchangeable product of the com-

bination of his heredity and environment.

A more direct ancestor of dehumanization as found in Robbe-Grillet's works which is still within the development of the sociological aspects of the term is Sartre's La Nausée. Robbe-Grillet acknowledges this himself in his own critical work, Pour un nouveau roman. For Sartre, however, the use of objects or the recognition of them does not mean the same thing as Robbe-Grillet's vision of objects because Sartre can not sever the bond between description of human and thing.

Camus' L'Etranger has also been mentioned in terms of dehumanization. This can be attributed to the character of Meursault who seems never to experience human feelings and only expresses his bodily needs. The stripped prose mirrors and is a correlative to the characterization of Meursault.

The sociological aspect of dehumanization is also a common theme in avant-garde theatre. A good example would be the works of Ionesco. In the theatre of Ionesco, the doll-like characters who act as robots on stage dramatize the dehumanization of man in society by society itself, its institutions and conventions. In the following scene man is easily seen as merely a hollow shell of himself:

Mme Smith: Dommage! Il était si bien conservé.

M. Smith: C'était le plus joli cadavre de Grande-Bretagne! Il ne paraissait pas son âge. Pauvre Bobby, il y avait quatre ans qu'il était mort et il était encore chaud. Un véritable cadavre vivant. Et comme il était gai!

Mme Smith: La pauvre Bobby.

M. Smith: Tu veux dire "le" pauvre Bobby.

Mme Smith: Non, c'est à sa femme que je pense. Elle s'appelait comme lui, Bobby, Bobby Watson. Comme ils avaient le même nom, on ne pouvait pas les distinguer l'un de l'autre quand on les voyait ensemble.<sup>5</sup>

The characters saying these lines are puppets, and they are dehumanized by their lack of self-awareness and acceptance of social conventions without question. These conventions and institutions grow, imprison and choke the life of the character. The presence of inanimate objects that dominate the stage such as the furniture in Le nouveau locataire and Les chaises or the dead body in Amédée symbolizes this dehumanization of man by society in Ionesco's theatre.

What happens to the Bobby Watson of the above citation is an obvious disintegration of the humanity or humanness of character. First, the name, the possession that is very precious to many men and that typifies their individuality is reduced to nothing. Finally, Bobby Watson divides and subdivides to the point that the concept of Bobby Watson as a separate entity is impossible. The world is full of Bobby Watsons.

It is about the time of Ionesco's first play that much attention is paid to Nietzsche, whose major works were written in the last decade of the nineteenth century. The most publicized concept of Nietzsche's is the oft quoted, "God is dead" assertion. A very facile conclusion to this quotation is that it is a symptom or foreshadowing of the death of man or humanity.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Eugène Ionesco, La cantatrice chauve (Paris, 1950), p. 22.

<sup>6</sup>See Michel Foucault, Les Mots et les choses (Paris, 1966).



One of the most famous twentieth century authors who treats the concept of dehumanization is Samuel Beckett. His novels as well as his plays show a distinct progression up to and beyond the disintegration of man. In all of his works this disintegration is first and most obviously shown on the physical level. This can be seen in the play En attendant Godot when the character Lucky becomes more physically handicapped in the course of the play. The ensemble of Beckett's works ends most appropriately by the most advanced degree of disintegration of the human form and psyche in L'Innommable where what is left of the human being stays immobile in an urn. Following this is the disintegration of the consciousness. This can be depicted through a linguistic disintegration of first a syntactical breakdown and then finally a word breakdown. The following passage from the opening of Molloy shows the first implication of physical deterioration. It is that the man is dependant upon others for his mobility: "Je suis dans la chambre de ma mère. C'est moi qui y vis maintenant. Je ne sais pas comment j'y suis arrivé. Dans une ambulance peut-être, un véhicule quelconque certainement. On m'a aidé. Seul je ne serais pas arrivé. Cet homme qui vient chaque semaine, c'est grâce à lui peut-être que je suis ici. Il me donne un peu d'argent et enlève les feuilles. Tant de feuilles, tant d'argent."<sup>7</sup>

Throughout the novel the character who narrates appears to become increasingly more deteriorated. The following description of the deterioration of the body appears at the end of the novel:

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<sup>7</sup>Samuel Beckett, Molloy (Paris, 1951), p. 7.

Maintenant côté corps je devenais, il me semblait rapidement méconnaissable. Et quand je me passait les mains sur le visage, dans un geste familier et maintenant plus que jamais excusable, ce n'était plus le même visage que sentaient mes mains et ce n'était plus les mêmes mains que sentait mon visage. Et cependant le fond de la sensation était le même que lorsque j'avais été bien rasé et parfumé et eu de l'intellectuel les mains blanches et molles. Et ce ventre que ne me connaissait pas restait mon ventre, mon vieux ventre, grâce à je ne sais quelle intuition. Pour tout dire je continuais à me reconnaître et même j'avais de mon identité un sens plus net et vif qu'auparavant, malgré ses lésions intimes et les plaies dont elle se couvrait. Et à ce point de vue j'étais très nettement en état d'infériorité vis-à-vis de mes autres connaissances.<sup>8</sup>

In looking at the chronological sequence of Samuel Beckett's works and those of Robbe-Grillet, it is easily seen that both writers are of the fifties and sixties. Samuel Beckett's works would have to be considered, however, closely anterior to Robbe-Grillet's because of the date of Beckett's first novel, Murphy, which appeared in 1947. Further support of this is the fact that Comment c'est, his last novel, appeared in 1961, and from this date little has appeared by him. Robbe-Grillet's career, however, started in the decade of the fifties, with the publication of Les Gommages, 1953. His last novel appeared as late as 1970 with the publication of Projet pour une révolution à New York.

The obvious physical deterioration of man as well as the psychological and linguistic deterioration that can be seen in Beckett's work marks the admission of contemporary man that outside forces beyond his control alter him and take from him the qualities of humanness. The very fact that these qualities of humanness are fragile and destructible by such forces as disease or time is what

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<sup>8</sup>Molloy, p. 263.

touches Beckett and is what he attempts to convey. Bruce Morrisette in the following citation implies that Robbe-Grillet saw the same qualities in Beckett that he himself reiterated in his critical works of a later date: "Dès 1953, l'auteur exprimait, dans des essais critiques sur d'autres écrivains, les idées caractéristiques sur lesquelles il reviendra dans ses écrits de pure 'théorie'. Dans son étude sur En attendant Godot, il félicite Beckett d'avoir, dans cette pièce, attaqué la littérature des idées, applaudit à sa 'regression au-delà du rien', et exalte non seulement sa négation de la signification en général, mais aussi son refus, par l'emploi de protagonistes amorphes et d'autres techniques semblables, de l'idée de personnalité ou d'identité."<sup>9</sup>

Parallel to the sociological development of the theme of dehumanization in the nineteenth century are the beginnings of the aesthetic aspect of dehumanization which is so well expressed by Ortega in La deshumanización del arte, 1925. A few of the authors that were treated in the discussion of the sociological dehumanization will overlap into this treatment of the aesthetic aspect of this concept. In the nineteenth century the sociological aspect of dehumanization and the aesthetic aspect were separate entities. The beginnings of the aesthetic definition of dehumanization can be seen in Flaubert and Mallarmé of the nineteenth century.

Flaubert's novels appeared late in the century, and it is from the point of view of form that his works preface the concept of dehumanization in the aesthetic sense. His ideology of the novel is most cited by critics of the New

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<sup>9</sup>Morrisette, p. 22.

Novel. For him, the ultimate in the novel was form. In his character portrayals there appears a total objectivity. For Flaubert, the artist must observe humanity "avec l'impartialité qu'on met dans les sciences physiques."<sup>10</sup> For Flaubert, the main objective is for the author to appear absent from the work. This is of course a negation of lyricism and this is a part of Ortega y Gasset's definition of dehumanization found in La deshumanización del arte. Ortega writes: "A fuerza de negacioness, et verso de Mallarmé anula toda resonancia vital y nos presenta figuras tan extra-terrestres que el mero contemplarlas es ya sumo placer. Que puede hacer entre estas fisonomías el pobre rostro del hombre que officia de poeta? Solo una cosa: desaparecer, volatizarse y quedar convertido en una pura voz anonima que sostiene en el aire las palabras, verdaderas protagonistas de la empresa lírica. Esa pura voz anónima, mero substrato acustico del verso, es la voz del poeta, que sabe aislarse de su hombre circundante."<sup>11</sup>

After Flaubert, the term dehumanization as applied to aesthetics is best exemplified in the poetry of Mallarmé at the turn of the century. Hermeticism, a major characteristic that is associated with Mallarmé's poetry, is by definition a negation of the human factor as essential to poetry. By changing his perspective of the poetic object, Mallarme conforms to the process of dehumanization as defined by Ortega y Gasset. Ortega writes: "Mallarme

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<sup>10</sup>André La Garde and Laurent Michard, XIX<sup>e</sup> Siècle, Les grands auteurs du programme (Paris, 1965), p. 477.

<sup>11</sup>José Ortega y Gasset, La deshumanización del arte (Madrid, 1925), p. 45.

fue el primer hombre del siglo pasado que quiso ser un poeta. Como él mismo dice, 'rehusó los materiales naturales' y compuso pequeños objetos líricos, diferentes de la fauna y la flora humanas. Esta poesía no necesita ser 'sentida', porque, como no hay en ella nada humano, no hay en ella nada patético."<sup>12</sup>

In the twentieth century, within the realm of the aesthetic definition of dehumanization is Proust's A la recherche du temps perdu. Proust dehumanizes his work by changing the perspective from which the reader perceives reality, or the novel. Of Proust Ortega writes: "Esto explica que los dos últimos fuesen tan entusiastas de la obra de Proust, como en general, aclara el placer que este escritor, tan de otro tiempo, proporciona a la gente nueva. Tal vez lo esencial que el latifundio de su libro tiene de comun con la nueva sensibilidad, es el cambio de perspectiva: desdén hacia las antiguas formas monumentales del alma que describía la novela, e inhumana atención a la fina estructura de los sentimientos, de las relaciones sociales, de los caracteres."<sup>13</sup>

Also at the beginning of the century Gide, in his particular fondness for experimentation with novelistic form, shows another of the characteristics of dehumanization. Reaction against tradition, that is to say, anything accepted as normal, is a common characteristic of dehumanization and Gide's experimentation with form puts him in the line of development of aesthetic dehumanization. It is Gide who abandoned the nineteenth century style of the novel

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<sup>12</sup>La deshumanización del arte, p. 45.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 49.

recounted by an omniscient author to write "récits" and to experiment with the form of the diary. "De donde resulta que la nueva inspiración, en apariencia tan extravagante, vuelve a tocar, cuando menos en un punto, el camino real del arte. Porque este camino se llama 'voluntad de estilo'. Ahora bien: estilizar es deformar lo real, desrealizar. Estilización implica deshumanización, y viceversa. No hay otra manera de deshumanizar que estilizar."<sup>14</sup>

Ionesco's theatre taken as an example of the wealth of exponents of the theme of dehumanization in avant-garde theatre can also be used as an example of dehumanization in the aesthetic sense. The puppet personages in having no pretension to imitate reality from the point of view of character analysis emphasize the concept in Ortega's La deshumanización del arte that reality and the work of art are two different concepts altogether. This is an example of Ortega's statement "estilizar es deshumanizar".

The element in Beckett's works that serves to include him in a discussion of the aesthetic concept of dehumanization is the lack of pretense at "vraisemblance". His characters are not created to be believable or to appear like people do in reality. This lack of interest or flagrant violation of "vraisemblance" proves the concurrence of sociological and aesthetic dehumanization in Beckett's works.

The best example of the combination of sociological and aesthetic dehumanization in a twentieth century French author is Robbe-Grillet. This study will treat dehumanization in the works of Alain Robbe-Grillet. The term

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<sup>14</sup>La deshumanización del arte, p. 38.

dehumanization as defined by Ortega has been ignored or dismissed by Robbe-Grillet's critics. Grossvogel, in The Limits of the Novel, dismisses Ortega's connection to Robbe-Grillet's works with no convincing argument whatsoever. Bruce Morrisette also makes a reference to Ortega but a very brief one that merely classifies dehumanization in a line with Brechtian dramatic theory:

"C'est La Jalousie que, sans la nommer, Robbe-Grillet défend contre l'accusation de 'dehumanisation', cherchant par-là à en disculper toute son oeuvre. Le terme 'dehumanización', dans le fameux ouvrage de Ortega y Gasset, n'était nullement un terme d'opprobre, mais plus ou moins le synonyme de la 'distanciación' brechtienne, c'est-à-dire un procédé artistique de stylization et de mise en forme ayant pour but de distinguer entre l'art et la vie réelle."<sup>15</sup>

Because of the neglect of Ortega's work with respect to that of Robbe-Grillet, the first chapter of this study will treat Robbe-Grillet's critical work, Pour un nouveau roman, and attempt to show any similar concepts in Ortega's work. Several elements of what Ortega calls "La deshumanización del arte" are present not only on Robbe-Grillet's works but in his literary theory. The criticism implying admonishment is what he defends himself against in Pour un nouveau roman.<sup>16</sup>

There are similarities in the aesthetic works of Robbe-Grillet and those of Ortega. It is because of these similarities that it could be said that Robbe-Grillet's novels are dehumanized not only in the sociological sense of the word,

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<sup>15</sup>Morrisette, p. 31.

<sup>16</sup>Morrisette, p. 31.

but in the aesthetic sense of the word as well.

Chapter II will present a discussion of these aspects of dehumanization in the totality of Robbe-Grillet's work, and the third chapter of this study will treat dehumanization in characterization. The cine-romans have been chosen as exemplary of this; however, any of the characters in Robbe-Grillet's novels would demonstrate the same characteristics. This problem of dehumanization of characterization relates directly to Pronko's criticism of Ionesco and Ionesco's theatre itself. Chapter IV of this study is entitled "Dehumanization in La Jalousie, Dans le labyrinthe and La Maison de rendez-vous; The disappearance of the Narrator and the Author". This discussion stems from one of the basic concepts presented in Ortega's La deshumanización del arte that is not elaborated in Robbe-Grillet's critical work, Pour un nouveau roman. In this chapter, proof of a progression and development of this aspect of dehumanization will be undertaken to show that two novels appearing later, Dans le labyrinthe and La Maison de rendez-vous show a higher degree of sophistication and development of the disappearance of the narrator and the author.

The last chapter of this study will treat dehumanization in Project pour une révolution à New York. This last novel will be shown as the highest point of development of the dehumanization theme in all of Robbe-Grillet's novels. It is projected that this study will culminate with the clarification of the term "dehumanization", its literary significance, and a clearer view of the literary career of Alain Robbe-Grillet.



## CHAPTER I

### DEHUMANIZATION AS SEEN BY ORTEGA AND ROBBE-GRILLET

The first meaningful use of the word "dehumanization" that can be related to Robbe-Grillet and twentieth century literature comes from Jose Ortega y Gasset's work on art criticism, La deshumanización del arte.<sup>1</sup> It concerns itself primarily with aesthetics and is both an analysis of the contemporary art of Ortega's time and more generally, the "antirealismo del arte contemporaneo."<sup>2</sup>

To those who might wonder to which art trends Ortega was referring, it would be interesting to consider the date 1925 and examine briefly the aesthetic tendencies ten to fifteen years previous to it. It must also be remembered that Ortega is referring specifically to art although he was at home in literary discussions and used them to develop his essay.

One art school closely anterior to the publication of Ortega's essay and to which he refers is expressionism.<sup>3</sup> Kirchner, a member of the Brucke group of

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<sup>1</sup> Angel del Rio, Historia de la literatura española (New York, 1963) II, p. 312.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> José Ortega y Gasset, La deshumanización del arte (Madrid, 1967), p. 52.

the expressionist school said that "men should not seek to mirror reality in the artistic endeavor, but instead to transform it."<sup>4</sup> The first paintings of Matisse are anterior to the publication of La deshumanización del arte. Matisse has been credited with liberating French art from the conventions of observed reality, and a look at his painting "The Large Studio", dated 1911, will show his lack of concern for the conventions and perspective and anatomy.<sup>5</sup> Just as the above mentioned artists and artistic philosophies have been credited with a liberation from the conventions of reality as it is perceived, Robbe-Grillet has been both praised and condemned for the same reasons.

Although Robbe-Grillet is writing over forty-five years later, there are significant similarities between him and Ortega. Ortega in this essay shows himself to be a perceptive art critic. Robbe-Grillet has not only shown himself as a controversial novelist, but also a lucide literary critic in his collections of articles now presented under the title, Pour un nouveau roman, published in 1963.

Most of what can be seen in Robbe-Grillet's Pour un nouveau roman and in Ortega's La deshumanización del arte can be equated, and the discussion of these similarities will proceed on three planes. The first part of this discussion will center itself around the term "dehumanization" and what it implies. The second area of discussion will treat Ortega and Robbe-Grillet's aesthetic similarities, and the last part of this study will treat their similarities on the

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<sup>4</sup>Hans L. C. Jaffé, 20000 Years of World Painting (New York, 1967), p. 316. An edited work.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 32.

philosophical plane.

To Ortega the word "deshumanización" could be applied to the press by which the artist observes that which he is to reproduce. The artist who observes is acting in a different capacity than the person who participates in an experience. The following passage illustrates this point: "Se trata, pues, de una perspectiva opuesta a la que usamos en la vida espontánea. En vez de ser la idea instrumento con que pensamos un objeto, la hacemos a ella objeto y termino de nuestro pensamiento."<sup>6</sup>

The key word in the preceding passage is "perspectiva". Ortega believed that the sense of sight was essential in the process in contemporary art that he described as the "dehumanization of art". According to Ortega, the maximum amount of distance between the observer and the object may be obtained by the painter who contemplates a scene. He writes:

En el pintor hemos llegado al máximo de distancia y al mínimo de intervención sentimental.

La pesadumbre inevitable de este análisis quedaría compensada si nos permitiese hablar con claridad de una escala de distancias espirituales entre la realidad y nosotros. En esa escala los grados de participación sentimental en los hechos; los grados de alejamiento, por el contrario, significan grados de liberación en que objetivamos el suceso real, convirtiéndolo en puro tema de contemplación. Situados en uno de los extremos, nos encontramos con un aspecto del mundo---personas, cosas, situaciones---que es la realidad "vívida"; desde el otro extremo, en cambio, vemos todo en su aspecto de realidad "contemplada".<sup>7</sup>

Ortega, in this passage, is clearly making a distinction between reality

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<sup>6</sup>La deshumanización del arte, p. 32.

<sup>7</sup>La deshumanización del arte, p. 30.

that is lived and reality that is contemplated. The word "contemplated" implies the sense of sight.

Robbe-Grillet and Ortega definitely concur on the element of sight being most contributory in effecting a distance between the perceived and the perceiver. Robbe-Grillet states this approach in his critical work, Pour un nouveau roman: "Le regard apparaît aussitôt dans cette perspective comme le sens privilégié, et particulièrement le regard appliqué aux contours (plus qu'aux couleurs, aux éclats, ou aux transparences). La description optique est en effet celle que opère le plus aisément la fixation des distances: le regard, s'il veut rester simple regard, laisse les choses à leur place respective."<sup>8</sup>

In their basic use of the word "dehumanization" there is a difference in the immediate meaning that both men attribute to the word. For Robbe-Grillet, "dehumanization" means a process negating anthropocentrism. He does not state the word "dehumanization", but he does imply it, however, by attacking a humanistic view of the world around man: "Condamner, au nom de l'humain, le roman qui met en scène un tel homme, c'est donc adopter le point de vue humaniste, selon lequel il ne suffit pas de montrer l'homme là où il est: il faut encore proclamer que l'homme est partout. Sous prétexte que l'homme ne peut prendre du monde qu'une connaissance subjective, l'humanisme décide de choisir l'homme comme justification de tout. Véritable pont d'âme jeté entre l'homme et les choses, le regard de l'humanisme est avant tout le gage d'une solidarité."<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Alain Robbe-Grillet, Pour un nouveau roman (Paris, 1963), p. 65.

<sup>9</sup>Pour un nouveau roman, p. 48.

As will be seen in a later section of this study, it is not the term "humanism" that Robbe-Grillet is opposed to. Instead, it is the anthropocentric basis of man's view of the world around him. Essentially, what Robbe-Grillet is saying in the preceding paragraph is that man is really no less anthropocentric with respect to art and the accepted interpretation of reality than before the Copernican universe was accepted. An aspect of this anthropocentrism is attributing human qualities to things.

To both Robbe-Grillet and Ortega, the metaphor is a key factor in their aesthetic views and to their respective definitions attributed to "dehumanization". This statement is, as far as a comparison could be permitted to stand, because both men although similar in seeing the importance of the metaphor, are very different in their aesthetic evaluation of it. As has been previously established, Robbe-Grillet attacks what he calls the "humanistic" on the basis of anthropocentrism. The most common manifestation of the anthropocentric quality in man is the metaphor. He writes: "La métaphore, en effet, n'est jamais une figure innocente. Dire que le temps est 'capricieux' au la montagne 'majestueuse', parler du 'cœur' de la forêt, d'un soleil 'impitoyable', d'un village 'blotti' aux creux du vallon, c'est, dans une certaine mesure, fournir des indications sur les choses elles-mêmes: forme, dimensions, . . . Dans la quasi-totalité de notre littérature contemporaine, ces analogies anthropomorphistes se repètent avec trop d'insistance, trop de cohérence, pour ne pas révéler tout un système métaphysique."<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Pour un nouveau roman, pp. 48-49.

According to Robbe-Grillet, the novel should wipe out the use of the metaphor and more specifically any analogical references: "Aussi rien ne doit-il être négligé dans l'entreprise de nettoyage. En y regardant de plus près, on n'aperçoit que les analogies anthropocentristes (mentales ou viscérales) ne doivent pas être mises seules en cause. Toutes les analogies son aussi dangereuses. Peut-être même les plus dangereuses sont-elles les plus sournoises, celles où l'homme n'est pas nommé."<sup>11</sup>

In examining this attitude, one cannot overlook the literary works of Robbe-Grillet. In all objectivity, Robbe-Grillet can not say that he has, in his own works, completely eliminated the metaphor. Valerie Minogue has observed this and has decided that it is not the metaphor itself that Robbe-Grillet is opposed to, but the pretension to a universal truth or nature in man.<sup>12</sup> Robbe-Grillet's answer to the metaphor is the objective correlative. The word "correlative" is so appropriate because repetition within a novel establishes a correlation between those things in the work. This differs from the symbol in that a symbol must stand for some abstract beyond the symbol whereas the correlative stands for nothing beyond the limits of the work. An example of this very characteristic element in the works of Robbe-Grillet can be seen in La Jalousie. The word in the title refers to the "jealousies" through which the husband looks at his wife and his friend. This word also refers to the emotion,

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<sup>11</sup> Pour un nouveau roman, p. 52.

<sup>12</sup> Valerie Minogue, "The Workings of Fiction in Les Gommès," Modern Language Review, LXII (July, 1967), p. 431.

jealousy, which is depicted in the story. This is one type of objective correlative in that the word "jalousie" expressing the emotion has an objective correlative in the word "jalousie" meaning the jealousy at the window.<sup>13</sup>

Another example of the objective correlative found in the same novel is the recurrence of a centipede in the form of a question mark on the wall.

The opinions of Ortega and Robbe-Grillet concerning the metaphor mark a divergence in the thought of the two men, but even in this divergence the fact that both men considered the metaphor a key factor in dehumanization or humanization is enough to reinforce a concurrence in their thought. For Robbe-Grillet, the metaphor was the dangerous element because it humanized; for Ortega, the metaphor was the potentially advantageous element because, as he said, it was through the metaphor that the artist could arrive at dehumanization. Ortega writes: "'El rayo arde en las nubes del cielo.' He aquí la elusión metafórica."<sup>14</sup> "Obtenido en esta forma tabuista, el instrumento metafórico puede luego emplearse con los fines más diversos. Uno de estos, el que ha predominado en la poesía, era ennoblecer el objeto real. Se usaba de la imagen similar con intención decorativa, para ornar y recamar la realidad amada. Sería curioso inquirir si en la nueva inspiración poética, al hacerse la metáfora sustancia y no ornamento, cabe notar un raro predominio de la imagen denigrante que, en lugar de ennoblecer y realzar, rebaja y veja

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<sup>13</sup>See Alain Robbe-Grillet, La Jalousie (Paris, 1957).

<sup>14</sup>La deshumanización del arte, p. 48.

a l pobre realidad."<sup>15</sup>

Even though Ortega saw only advantages in the area of signification and Robbe-Grillet saw only the disadvantages, Ortega acknowledges the possibility of many other ways to arrive at dehumanization. He writes: "Pero si es la metáfora el más radical instrumento de deshumanización, no puede decirse que sea el único. Hay innumerables de alcance diverso."<sup>16</sup>

One of these methods of arriving at dehumanization is one also accredited to Robbe-Grillet. It is to change the perspective of the established order. "Uno, el más simple, consiste en un simple cambio de la perspectiva habitual. Desde el punto de vista humano tienen las cosas un orden, una jerarquía determinados. Nos parecen unas muy importantes, otras menos, otras por completo insignificantes. Para satisfacer el ansia de deshumanizar no es, pues, forzoso alterar las formas primarias de las cosas. Basta con invertir la jerarquía y hacer un arte donde aparezcan en primer plano, destacados con aire monumental, los mínimos sucesos de la vida."<sup>17</sup>

Although Ortega has been lauded for exhibiting no anthropocentric qualities, he does not state that this is his definition of dehumanization in the sense of La deshumanización del arte. For Ortega, dehumanization in its strictest sense means two things. First, it means a reaction against the traditional interpretation of reality. For Ortega, a traditional interpretation

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<sup>15</sup>La deshumanización del arte, p. 48.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>La deshumanización del arte, pp. 48-49.



of reality implies the concentration of the artist on depicting reality rather than a concentration on the form that is used to present it: "Buena parte de lo que he llamado 'deshumanización' y asco a las formas vivas proviene de esta antipatía a la interpretación tradicional de las realidades."<sup>18</sup>

Ortega is reacting to the traditional interpretation of reality which he says invites the artist to have no style at all. "Ahora bien: estilizar es deformar lo real, desrealizar. Estilización implica deshumanización. Y viceversa, no hay otra manera de deshumanizar que estilizar. El realismo, en cambio, invitando al artista a seguir dócilmente la forma de las cosas, le invita a no tener estilo. Por eso el entusiasta de Zurbarán, no sabiendo qué decir, dice que sus cuadros tienen 'carácter', como tienen carácter y no estilo Lucas o Sorolla, Dickens o Galdós."<sup>19</sup>

The second important concept upon which Ortega bases his idea of dehumanization is that of aesthetics, stylization in particular. This was stated very clearly in the preceding passage. "Stylization", for the purpose of this study, means the artist's concentration on style and form in a work of art and his minimization of observed reality.

In spite of the fact that these two words are not given as directly related to dehumanization by Robbe-Grillet, one can see evidence of an acceptance of these concepts in his works and criticism. Evidences of Ortega's concept of stylization and the rebellion against conventionalized methods of conveying

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<sup>18</sup>La deshumanización del arte, pp. 48-49.

<sup>19</sup>La deshumanización del arte, pp. 38-39.

reality appear in the work of Robbe-Grillet. Most obviously, Robbe-Grillet's descriptive technique shows an abrupt diversion from the accepted techniques of conventionalized reality and a deliberate effort at stylization. Many critics have noticed what has been termed his objective descriptions which in Dans le Labyrinthe for example, can be called geometric. In this novel, the snow is described as falling "vertically", and the streets are always perpendicular and at perfectly regular intervals.<sup>20</sup>

Although Robbe-Grillet's definition of dehumanization emanates from the basic concept of anthropocentrism, this in itself implies a reaction against the traditional. He wrote an article called "Sur quelques notions périmées", in which he states what he considers obsolete in the novel. Robbe-Grillet attacks what is taken as the rule in the novel, the technique in the tradition of Balzac.<sup>21</sup>

The second part of this study of the similarities between Robbe-Grillet and Ortega falls under the category of aesthetics. It is well known of course that Ortega was not uniquely an art or literary critic. He is a famous philosopher, and only a part of his complete works treat aesthetics.<sup>22</sup> Robbe-Grillet is primarily a literary man, but scientific background must not be overlooked, and with this information just stated Robbe-Grillet must not be

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<sup>20</sup> Jay Nelson Roy, "Alain Robbe-Grillet: Vers une esthétique de l'absurde", French Review, XXXVII (February, 1964), p. 404.

<sup>21</sup> Pour un nouveau roman, pp. 25-44.

<sup>22</sup> José Ferrater Mora, Ortega y Gasset, An Outline of His Philosophy (New Haven, 1957), p. 46.

excluded from having the potential of becoming a philosopher. In this category of aesthetics where the attempt will be made to prove and illustrate similarities in the thought of these two men, the topics to be discussed will be limited to the question of the work of art including the form, and the question of "art for art's sake".

The most obvious similarity that can be found in Ortega's evaluation of the new art and Robbe-Grillet's defense of the New Novel is that both men defined their respective topics as unpopular. Ortega said that he thought that the new art, sociologically speaking, divided men into two classes, those who didn't understand and those who did.<sup>23</sup> Although Robbe-Grillet himself does not classify his public in this manner, his critics have divided themselves in a similar fashion: that of for and against. None of the public seems to understand his work. He writes: "Mes romans n'ont pas été accueillis, lors de leur parution, avec une chaleur unanime; c'est le moins que l'on puisse dire. Du demi-silence réprobateur dans lequel tomba le premier (Les Gommages) au refus massif et violent que la grande presse opposa au second (Le Voyeur), il n'y avait guère de progrès; sinon pour le tirage, qui s'accrut sensiblement. Bien sûr, il y eut aussi quelques louanges çà et là, mais que parfois me déroutaient encore davantage."<sup>24</sup>

Robbe-Grillet does not, however, state a belief that his work is for an elite. "Dans les revues, je trouvais souvent plus de sérieux. Mais je ne

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<sup>23</sup>La deshumanización del arte, p. 17.

<sup>24</sup>Pour un nouveau roman, p. 7.

réussissais pas à me satisfaire d'être reconnu, goûté, étudié, par les seuls spécialistes qui m'avaient encouragé dès le début; j'étais persuadé d'écrire pour le 'gran public', je souffrais d'être considéré comme un auteur 'difficile'."25

This could be interpreted as a difference in the implications of an elite in Ortega by the separation of the public into those who understand and those who do not.26

Another area of concurrence between Ortega and Robbe-Grillet concerns the question of the work of art including form. Michel Butor, another "New Novelist" associated with Robbe-Grillet and Natalie Sarraute states the belief that the form is a part of the work of art. "Mais le style, ce n'est pas seulement la façon dont les mots sont choisis à l'intérieur de la phrase, mais celle qu'ont les phrases de les suivre les unes les autres, et leurs paragraphes et les épisodes. A tous les niveaux de cette énorme structure qu'est un roman, il peut y avoir style, c'est-à-dire forme, réflexion sur la forme, et par conséquent, prosodie."27

Although Robbe-Grillet comes very close to this same affirmation when he says that form and content are equally important and completely undivorceable concepts. "Le zèbre est réel, le nier ne serait pas raisonnable, bien que ses rayures soient sans doute dépourvues de sens. Il en va de même pour une

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25 Ibid., pp. 7-8.

26 La deshumanización del arte, pp. 18-19.

27 Michel Butor, Essais sur le roman (Paris, 1964), p. 43.

symphonie, une peinture, un roman: c'est dans leur forme que réside leur réalité."<sup>28</sup>

Le Voyeur contains a salient piece of evidence of this. The two parts of the novel are separated by a blank unprinted page. This can be interpreted as corresponding to the blank in the story and in Mathias' mind.<sup>29</sup>

Ortega demonstrates in his essay La deshumanización del arte an awareness of the art medium also included in the work of art. In other words, just as to Michel Butor the art media of the novel, that is to say, the arrangement of the printed word on the blank page, the canvas and paint involved in painting a portrait or a still-life is part of the work of art. This attitude of course is not a result of spontaneous generation. Mallarmé was obsessed with the violation of the blank page by the author, and Faulkner experimented with punctuation to create desired effects. The following passage shows Ortega's awareness of the art medium as part of the work of art.

Imagínese el lector que estamos mirando un jardín al través del vidrio de una ventana. Nuestros ojos se acomodarán de suerte que el rayo de la visión penetre el vidrio, sin detenerse en él, y vaya a prenderse en las flores y frondas. Como la meta de la visión es el jardín y hasta él va lanzado el rayo visual, o veremos el vidrio, pasará nuestra mirada a su través, sin percibirlo. Cuanto más puro sea el cristal menos lo veremos. Pero luego, haciendo un esfuerzo, podemos desentendernos del jardín y, retrayendo el rayo ocular, detenerlo en el vidrio. Entonces el jardín desaparece a nuestros ojos y de él solo vemos unas masas de color confuses que parecen pegadas al cristal. Por tanto, ver el jardín y ver el vidrio de la ventana son dos operaciones incompatibles, la una excluye a la otra y requieren acomodaciones

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<sup>28</sup>Pour un nouveau roman, p. 41.

<sup>29</sup>John Sturrock, The French New Novel (London, 1969), p. 188.

oculares diferentes.<sup>30</sup>

Ortega further says that the reader who is interested in the story of the two characters adjusts his perception from the literary point of view and does not see the work of art.<sup>31</sup> If one were to substitute the term work of art for the vidrio, one could see the same attitude that Robbe-Grillet has, that the form and art medium are not divorceable from content.

The last element in this discussion of the comparative aesthetics of Robbe-Grillet and Ortega will be the question of "art for art's sake". Did one or both of these men espouse the term or demonstrate an affinity for this literary term long associated with the nineteenth century? Ortega does not, in course of the essay under discussion, use the term "art for art's sake" to refer to the phenomenon which he defines as "dehumanization of art". In the opinion of the author of this study there are two basic reasons for this. The first is that Ortega was not writing a manifesto or even a defense of the new art; he wrote a lucid piece of art criticism. Robbe-Grillet's Pour un nouveau roman is not only an apology for the New Novel, but also a vulgarization of it. This statement can find support in the passages previously cited showing Robbe-Grillet's awareness of the unpopularity of his novels. Ortega, on the other hand does not seem to be writing an apology at all. There appears to be no textual evidence of an espousal of any aesthetic proponents. The second reason for Ortega's avoiding any literary term such as "art for art's sake" is his obvious

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<sup>30</sup>La deshumanización del arte, pp. 22-23.

<sup>31</sup>La deshumanización del arte, p. 23.

sophistication with respect to the arts. He would avoid describing an aesthetic phenomenon in terms of a literary trend belonging to the preceding century.

Robbe-Grillet, does, however, employ this term in the course of his essay, and critics have used the term in reference to Pour un nouveau roman.<sup>32</sup> If one remembers that this work's purpose is to explain the New Novel to the reading public, it is natural that Robbe-Grillet would have the tendency to oversimplify.<sup>33</sup> In this portion of the discussion of the comparative aesthetics of Robbe-Grillet and Ortega, the elements in Ortega that would or could be interpreted as "art for art's sake" will be presented and compared to similar elements in Robbe-Grillet. An attempt will be made to avoid the use of literary terminology applicable to the nineteenth century.

The first similarity that La deshumanización del arte has with what might be interpreted as "art for art's sake" is Ortega's description of the new art as an "artistic art". "He aquí por que el artista nuevo divide al público en dos classes de individuos: los que le entienden y los que no lo entienden; esto es, los artistas y los que no lo son. El arte nuevo es un arte artístico."<sup>34</sup>

The concept of an art understandable only to the artists implies an autonomy of art. It does not necessarily imply that which is not useful is beautiful, nor that which is useful is ugly. The previous statement, of course,

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<sup>32</sup>Angel Facío, "Para Una novela", Revista de Occidente, IX (June, 1965), p. 397.

<sup>33</sup>Pour un nouveau roman, pp. 7-9.

<sup>34</sup>La deshumanización del arte, p. 25.

is the chief proponent of "art for art's sake" as stated by Gautier in Mademoiselle de Maupin.<sup>35</sup>

Robbe-Grillet, on the other hand, does use the term, and he says that the work of art creates its own reality.<sup>36</sup> The following passage illustrates Robbe-Grillet's use of the expression "art for art's sake": "C'est alors le reproche de 'gratuité' que l'on nous oppose, sous prétexte que nous affirmons notre non-dépendance. L'art pour l'art n'a pas bonne presse: cela fait penser au jeu, aux jongleries, au dilettantisme. Mais la nécessité, à quoi l'oeuvre d'art se reconnaît, n'a rien a voir avec l'utilité. C'est une nécessité tout intérieure, que apparaît évidemment comme gratuite lorsque le système de référence est fixe du dehors: vis-à-vis de la révolution, par exemple, nous l'avons dit, l'art le plus haut peut sembler une entreprise secondaire, dérisoire même."<sup>37</sup>

From the previous passage Robbe-Grillet neither accepts the term nor does he reject it. It is interesting to note that he is careful to separate the meaning of the necessity of the work of art from its utility. As established in the preceding paragraph, utility would exclude the concept of "art for art's sake".

Another important similarity between Robbe-Grillet and Ortega that

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<sup>35</sup>Théophile Gautier, "Preface", Mademoiselle de Maupin (Paris, 1888), p. 22.

<sup>36</sup>Pour un nouveau roman, pp. 42-43.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid.



could be interpreted under the guise of a "contemporary art for art's sake" is the supremacy of form or at least an equating of it with content. Ortega says that seeing a work of art, that is the form, and everyday reality are two separate operations.<sup>38</sup>

Robbe-Grillet has said that form is as important as content and in the literary work would be equated with it in importance. Robbe-Grillet attacks the concept that they are divorced in the following statement:

Parler du contenu d'un roman comme d'une chose indépendante de sa forme, cela revient à rayer le genre entier du domaine de l'art. Car l'oeuvre d'art ne contient rien, au sens strict du terme, c'est-à-dire comme une boîte peut renfermer, ou non, à l'intérieur, quelque objet de nature étrangère. L'art n'est pas une enveloppe aux couleurs plus ou moins brillantes chargée d'ornementer le 'message' de l'auteur, un papier doré autour d'un paquet de biscuits, un enduit sur un mur, une sauce qui fait passer le poisson. L'art n'obéit à aucune servitude de ce genre, ni d'ailleurs à aucune autre fonction préétablie. Il ne s'appuie sur aucune vérité qui existerait avant lui; et l'on peut dire qu'il n'exprime rien que lui-même.<sup>39</sup>

Both men also demonstrate a rejection of the concept of verisimilitude. They both acknowledge the fact that there is no reason for a work of art to imitate reality, and they do this, essentially, for the same reason. First, Ortega says that a work of art is not reality: "El pintor tradicional que hace un retrato pretende haberse apoderado de la realidad de la persona cuando, en verdad y a lo sumo, ha dejado en el lienzo una esquemática selección caprichosamente decidida por su mente, de la infinitud que integra la persona real. Qué tal si, en lugar de querer pintar a ésta, el pintor se resolviese a pintar

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<sup>38</sup>La deshumanización del arte, p. 25.

<sup>39</sup>Pour un nouveau roman, p. 42.

su idea, su esquema de la persona? Entonces el cuadro sería la verdad misma y no sobrevendría el fracaso inevitable. El cuadro, renunciando a emular la realidad, se convertirá en lo que auténticamente es: un cuadro--una irrealidad."<sup>40</sup>

Thus, Ortega in this statement implies a questioning of verisimilitude in affirming the essence of unreality of the work of art. Robbe-Grillet also seems to reject the concept of verisimilitude implying that it is old-fashioned or *passé*. He states that he was particularly impressed by the critics who admonished the lack of naturalness of the characters in *L'Immortelle*, for instance. He says that all the criticisms against him are in reality only one:

On voit que ces trois reproches n'en constituent au fond qu'un seul: la structure du film ne donne pas assez confiance dans la vérité objective des choses. D'une part, Istanbul est une vraie ville, et c'est bien elle que l'on voit d'un bout à l'autre de la projection; de même l'héroïne est incarnée à l'écran par une vraie femme. D'autre part, pour ce qui est de l'histoire, il est évident qu'elle est fautive: ni l'actrice ne sont morts au cours du tournage, ni même le chien . . . Le vrai, le faux et le faire croire sont devenus plus ou moins le sujet de toute œuvre moderne; celle-ci, au lieu d'être un prétendu morceau de réalité, se développe en tant que réflexion sur la réalité (ou sur le peu de réalité, comme on voudra). Elle ne cherche plus à cacher son caractère nécessairement mensonger, en se présentant comme une "histoire vécue".<sup>41</sup>

In this statement Robbe-Grillet is clearly questioning the concept of verisimilitude as a valid aesthetic concept in the twentieth century. He later more than implies that this is a naive assumption for literary critics to make. He shows himself as almost even exasperated by the same criticisms centered

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<sup>40</sup>La deshumanización del arte, pp. 51-52.

<sup>41</sup>Pour un nouveau roman, p. 129.

around the concept that each work of art must be true-seeming: "Quelquefois aussi, agacé par les objections du genre: 'Les choses ne se passent pas comme ça dans la vie', 'Il n'existe pas d'hôtel comme celui de votre Marienbad', 'Un mari jaloux ne se comporte pas comme celui de votre Jalousie', 'Les aventures turques de votre Français, dans L'Immortelle, son invraisemblables', 'Votre soldat perdu dans le labyrinthe ne porte pas ses insignes militaires à la bonne place', etc. . ."<sup>42</sup>

Closely connected to the concept of "art for art's sake" are the concepts of humor and irony. These, according to Ortega, are the by-products of stylization that is a process of dehumanization. To him a product of stylization is irony: "Pero el artista de ahora nos invita a que contemplemos un arte que es una broma, que es, esencialmente la burla de sí mismo. Porque en esto radica la comicidad de esta inspiración. En vez de reírse de alguien o algo determinado--sin víctima no hay comedia--, el arte nuevo ridiculiza el arte."<sup>43</sup> In a later paragraph Ortega uses the word "ironic" to describe the vision of the contemporary artist.<sup>44</sup>

Some of the criticism of Robbe-Grillet can be related to these elements that can be found in Ortega's criticism. Robbe-Grillet's first novel, Les Gommes, clearly has the format of the traditional detective story. Wallas, a special investigator has been sent to a city to examine the supposed murder of

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<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 139.

<sup>43</sup>La deshumanización del arte, p. 61.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid.

a certain Dupont. Bruce Morrisette has fully developed evidence that Robbe-Grillet was using deliberately the myth of Oedipus as a basic pattern in the novel. Morrisette establishes the probability that Wallas killed his father. He compares the drunkard who repeats riddles to Wallas to the Sphinx from the Oedipus myth. He proposes that the letters "di" on the eraser that Wallas buys come from the name "Oedipe". He also notices the allusion at the end of the novel to Wallas' feet which are swollen from walking.<sup>45</sup>

There is no reason to refute these findings by Bruce Morrisette. It would be interesting to consider these ideas with the concept of irony and humor in mind. It is very possible that Robbe-Grillet was making fun of the detective story with its emphasis on plot. Keeping Robbe-Grillet's article in mind, "Sur quelques notions périmées", the story or intrigue is one of the elements that he questions. The detective story is most exemplary of the form of the novel as a literary genre most acceptable to the masses.

Another phenomenon that occurs in the literary works of Robbe-Grillet that could also be interpreted as a type of irony or humor could be the correlations to the other novels in one work as in the scene in L'Immortelle where a man is looking through jealousies at something. The attentive reader who has read Robbe-Grillet's other works would think of La Jalousie. Another phenomenon that could be interpreted in this category is the appearance of many dialogue scenes in unfamiliar languages which are not translated in the same work, L'Immortelle. This too can be interpreted as a special type of

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<sup>45</sup>Bruce Morrisette, Alain Robbe-Grillet (New York, 1965), pp. 14-15.

mild pleasantry between the author and the reader who might understand one or more of these languages. It also could be interpreted as the novelist making fun of the traditional form of the novel, and the reader's dependence upon it.

Although there is a wide span of years between the appearance of these works, there is an important main philosophical current that extends the length of the twentieth century to which both men are linked. This is phenomenology. It is not the purpose of this study to relate Robbe-Grillet and Ortega to the phenomenological movement by a detailed comparison of them to several philosophers who are recognized as belonging to or heading this movement.<sup>46</sup>

Ortega is obviously familiar with phenomenology because he vulgarizes a few basic concepts in the portion of La deshumanización del arte called "Unas gotas de fenomenología". It must be remembered that Ortega is not necessarily introducing aesthetic tenets of his own in this essay. The important factor in examining the philosophical manifestations in this essay is that Ortega is relating this philosophical movement to art and that Robbe-Grillet is also relating the same philosophical movement to the field of literature.<sup>47</sup>

In the portion of La deshumanización del arte mentioned above, Ortega evokes a death-bed scene in which a man suffers. There are four people in

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<sup>46</sup>Herbert Spieglerberg, The Phenomenological Movement, a Historical Introduction (Hague, 1960), 2 Vols.

<sup>47</sup>Minogue, p. 430.

the room with him. They are a painter, a doctor, a journalist, and the man's wife. After this presentation Ortega adds a very vital affirmation to this comparison. "Resulta, pues, que una misma realidad se quiebra en muchas realidades divergentes cuando es mirada desde puntos de vista distintos. Y nos ocurre preguntarnos: ¿cual de esas múltiples realidades es la verdadera, la auténtica? Cualquiera decisión que tomemos será arbitraria. Nuestra preferencia por una y otra solo puede fundarse en el capricho. Todas esas realidades son equivalentes, cada una la auténtica para su congruo punto de vista. Lo único que podemos hacer es clasificar estos puntos de vista y elegir entre ellos el que prácticamente parezca más normal o más espontáneo."<sup>48</sup>

In order to show this same concept in Robbe-Grillet's literary works, Les Gommages will be used as an example. This novel is a version of a detective novel as has been previously established in this chapter. It concerns a man named Dupont who is wounded in an attempted murder and who pretends that he has been murdered. In what would first seem to be a recurrence of the same act, the reader sees several versions of the shooting of Dupont. This is really a reconstruction in the mind of the detective Wallas of what could have occurred in Dupont's apartment. Robbe-Grillet is presenting logical possibilities and at the same time he is forcing the reader to create these possibilities in his own mind. Of course if one keeps the fictionality of Les Gommages in mind, it is certainly possible that all could be

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<sup>48</sup>La deshumanización del arte, pp. 27-28.

true within the given data that Wallas has to work with. Thus, if one read the following quotation from the previously cited section by Ortega and substituted the word "plausibilities" for "realidades", the similarity is the philosophical vulgarization and the literary manifestation will be evident:

"Todas esas realidades son equivalentes, cada una la autentica para su congruo punto de vista. Lo único que podemos hacer es clasificar estos puntos de vista y elegir entre ellos el que practicamente parezca más normal o más espontaneo. Así llegaremos a una noción mas absoluta, pero, al menos, practica y normativa de realidad."<sup>49</sup>

In Les Gommès different points of view are considered reality by the different characters in the novel. Dupont has been wounded. To Garinatti, the hired assassin, Dupont is not dead, because he knows that he failed in his attempt. To Bonaventure, Garinatti's employer, Dupont is not dead, because he read the account of Dupont's death in the newspaper. To the doctor who is in Dupont's confidence, Dupont is not dead, but to Dupont's landlady he is dead. To Wallas, Dupont is dead because he is investigating Dupont's murder. At the end of the novel, when Wallas kills Dupont who returns to his room, Dupont is then really dead. Both points of view, that Dupont was dead and that he was alive are true or at least equivalent realities within the framework of the novel.

Even more closely related to Ortega's view of several realities and the illustration of many equivalent points of view is the novel, Dans le labyrinthe.

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<sup>49</sup>La deshumanización del arte, p. 28.

It has been suggested that this novel is about a doctor who, treating a patient who is a soldier, tries to put himself in the position of the dying soldier. There is a strong similarity between the situation in this novel and that of Ortega's scene concerning a dying man. It could not be proven that Robbe-Grillet expressly used Ortega's vulgarization as the basic structure of his novel, but the similarity is indeed striking. Remembering Ortega's example, there is a dying man in a room. There are four people observing him; his wife, the doctor, the journalist, and the artist. The doctor in this novel corresponds to the situation of either the doctor, the journalist, or the painter of Ortega's vulgarization. The important elements in Ortega's example are the painter and the woman, the man's wife who is not observing the situation, but living it:

La mujer, pues, no asiste a la escena, sino que está dentro de ella; no la contempla, sino que la vive. . . En el pintor hemos llegado al máximo de distancia y al mínimo de intervención sentimental.

La pesadumbre inevitable de este análisis quedaría compensada si nos permitiese hablar con claridad de una escala de distancias espirituales entre la realidad y nosotros. En esa escala los grados de proximidad equivalen a grados de participation sentimental en los hechos; los grados de alejamiento, por el contrario, significan grados de liberación en que objetivamos el suceso real, convirtiéndolo en puro tema de contemplación. Situados en uno de los extremos, nos encontramos con un aspecto del mundo--personas, cosas, situaciones--que es la realidad "vívida", desde el otro extremo, en cambio, vemos todo en su aspecto de realidad "contemplada".<sup>50</sup>

It is the reader himself who is the character most resembling the woman of Ortega's death scene. It must be remembered that Robbe-Grillet had the

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<sup>50</sup>La deshumanización del arte, pp. 28-30.



feeling that it was the reader who really created the novel by the action of reading: "Il vaudrait mieux admettre une solution d'un autre ordre: de même que le seul temps qui importe est celui du film, le seul 'personage' important est le spectateur: c'est dans sa tête que se déroule toute l'histoire, que est exactement imaginée par lui."<sup>51</sup>

It is in creating the reality that is the work of art. The reader is not contemplating that "reality" which is the work of art, he is living it. Even though this analogy borders on being a forced one, the point of this part of the discussion is that there are different levels of observed and lived reality according to Ortega and indirectly implied by Robbe-Grillet's literary production.

Another element that both men illustrate in their before-mentioned works is an essentialist view of man with respect to his place in the world. There is a passage in La deshumanización del arte that can be interpreted to mean that man by his essence is separate from the inorganic world: "Ahora bien: lo humano, el repertorio de elementos que integran nuestro mundo habitual posee una jerarquía de tres rangos; hay primero el orden de las personas, hey luego el de los seres vivos, hay, en fin, las cosas inorgánicas."<sup>52</sup> Ortega's division consists of three parts. The important element in this division is that Ortega has demonstrated a view of man as separate from his environment.

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<sup>51</sup> Pour un nouveau roman, p. 132.

<sup>52</sup> La deshumanización del arte, p. 39.

Robbe-Grillet makes a division of men separate from the remainder of inhuman things:

Or le monde n'est ni signifiant ni absurde. Il est, tout simplement. C'est là, en tout cas, ce qu'il a de plus remarquable. Et soudain cette évidence nous frappe avec une force contre laquelle nous ne pouvons plus rien. D'un seul coup toute la belle construction s'écroule: ouvrant les yeux à l'improviste, nous avons éprouvé, une fois de trop, le choc de cette réalité têtue dont nous faisons semblant d'être venus à bout. Autour de nous, défiant la meute de nos adjectifs animistes ou ménagers, les choses sont là. Leur surface est nette et lisse, intacte, sans éclat louche ni transparence. Toute notre littérature n'a pas encore réussi à en entamer le plus petit coin, à en amollir la moindre courbe.<sup>53</sup>

The world is and man is. That is, in essence what Robbe-Grillet is saying in this passage. Robbe-Grillet is obviously not entering the realm of the existentialists with this affirmation. In his Pour un nouveau roman, he analyses this basic view that man by his essence is removed and separate from the world about him and decides that this is what most critics reproach him for. "En simplifiant la position de nos nouveaux inquisiteurs, on peut résumer celle-ci en deux phrases; si je dis: 'Le monde c'est l'homme', j'obtiendrai toujours l'absolution; tandis que si je dis: 'Les choses sont les choses, et l'homme n'est que l'homme', je suis aussitôt reconnu coupable de crime contre l'humanité."<sup>54</sup>

The last point with which the author of this study hopes to unite the term dehumanization of Ortega and the attacks on humanism made by Robbe-Grillet is under the term of contemporary humanism. With respect to Robbe-

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<sup>53</sup>Pour un nouveau roman, p. 18.

<sup>54</sup>Pour un nouveau roman, p. 47.

Grillet's terminology it has been established that in his vocabulary the term "humanism" was synonymous with "anthropocentric". There is textual evidence in Pour un nouveau roman that Robbe-Grillet affirms a different type of humanism. "Notre monde, aujourd'hui, est moins sûr de lui-même, plus modeste peut-être puisqu'il a renoncé à la toute-puissance de la personne, mais plus ambitieux aussi puisqu'il regarde au-delà. Le culte exclusif de 'l'humain' a fait place à une prise de conscience plus vaste, moins anthropocentriste."<sup>55</sup>

What Robbe-Grillet represents is a reaction against what André Niel calls "l'humanisme anthropomorphe". That is, a philosophy or philosophies that assume that man is the measure of all things. "D'une part, certaines doctrines supposent--franchement ou implicitement--que l'homme est la mesure de toutes choses. Nous percevons l'univers, l'infini, nous connaissons les lois des phénomènes, mais nous resterions cependant enfermés dans nos sciences et les images de notre culture."<sup>56</sup>

In spite of Robbe-Grillet's attacks on humanism, both he and Ortega have the fact in common that they have been called humanists. Ortega has been called a humanist in the broad sense of the word, and in the introduction to L'Humanisme d'Ortega y Gasset, Pierre Mesnard confirms that Ortega's main thesis in all of his works is that man is the basic problem in life. "En second lieu, cette doctrine ayant été établie en fonction de la crise de l'homme

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p. 28.

<sup>56</sup> André Niel, Les Grands Appels de l'humanisme contemporaine (Paris, 1966), p. 11.

contemporain, il y avait tout intérêt à concentrer l'attention sur ce qu'Ortega veut nous dire de l'homme et sur les raisons qu'il a de nous le dire" assurés ainsi de ne pas trahir l'intention profonde d'un philosophe qui se borne, en fin de compte, à commenter cette affirmation fondamentale, que l'homme est le problème de la vie."<sup>57</sup>

Bruce Morrisette, one of Robbe-Grillet's critics, says that his descriptive style has misled many critics, and that beyond these dehumanized descriptions lies the fact that Robbe-Grillet is concerned with man's position in the universe and the problems that man has encountered as being a part of the universe.<sup>58</sup>

Carlos Rojas would say that Robbe-Grillet's works are humanistic. He sees dehumanization as a part of a process that leads toward humanism. "Las novelas más representativas del siglo XX, incluso las que Ortega llamaría 'deshumanizadas' pertenecen a una constante humanística."<sup>59</sup> He further attacks the limited view of dehumanization as an opposite of humanism. "Bruce Morrisette, por ejemplo, quedase en meras palabras cuando intenta explicar el humanismo de Robbe-Grillet y dedica en cambio exhaustivo análisis sus inmensas diferencias locales y personales. La novela del siglo XIX es una análisis del hombre, una gigantesca teoría del carácter y su

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<sup>57</sup>Pierre Mesnard, "Introduction", L'humanisme d'Ortega y Gasset (Paris, 1957), x.

<sup>58</sup>See Bruce Morrisette, Les romans de Robbe-Grillet.

<sup>59</sup>Carlos Rojas, Problemas de la Nueva Novela Española (Madrid, 1965), p. 124.

proyección de la sociedad. La novela antigua nos enseña que el hombre es; la novela de hoy se preguntara su porqué y su para qué."60

Robbe-Grillet does not deny humanism but affirms a belief in something bigger. "Notre monde, aujourd'hui, est moins sûr de lui-même, plus modeste peut-être puisqu'il a renoncé à la toute-puissance de la personne, mais plus ambitieux aussi puisqu'il regarde au-delà. Le culte exclusif de 'l'humain' a fait place à une prise de conscience plus vaste, moins anthropocentriste."61

Opposite to humanism is what Niel calls cosmological humanism which he defines as man's breaking the limitations of his own man-centered version of the universe, his rising above his anthropocentrism and his attempting a union between man and the universe. "La designation 'humanisme cosmologique' souligne l'union de l'homme et de l'univers. . . L'idée profonde qui promeut l'humanisme cosmologique est la conviction inébranable que toute situation locale dans laquelle nous nous débattons doit s'éclairer à la lumière de la situation universelle la plus vaste que nous puissions connaître."62

There is a definite similarity in the artistic analysis given by Ortega in his La deshumanización del arte and the works of Alain Robbe-Grillet. The word "deshumanización" used by Ortega corresponds to the implication of dehumanization as presented in Pour un nouveau roman, and on a more abstract

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<sup>60</sup>Ibid., p. 125.

<sup>61</sup>Pour un nouveau roman, p. 28.

<sup>62</sup>See André Niel, Les grands appels de l'humanisme contemporain.

level, both Ortega and Robbe-Grillet could be interpreted as contemporary humanists. Dehumanization is part of a larger expression of humanism. It is a necessary process through which man will arrive at a larger expression of humanism, a humanism refusing man as the center of the universe and refusing the prejudices and intellectual shackles which are corollaries of it. It is a part of a humanism negating the finitude of the human mind or the human species, thus affirming that man is not the center, but a part of the infinite universe.

## CHAPTER II

### DEHUMANIZATION IN THE TOTALITY OF ROBBE-GRILLET'S WORKS

There is definite textual evidence that there is a similarity in the aesthetics of both Ortega y Gasset and Robbe-Grillet. This leads to the contention that the concept of dehumanization in Ortega's La deshumanización del arte is present in Robbe-Grillet's aesthetics. One basic element in both men's aesthetic works that can be applied to dehumanization is the concept that the author in dehumanizing minimizes his own role in the process of artistic creation. A corollary of the previous statement is the concept of humor and irony which is present in the art that Ortega was criticizing and in the works of Robbe-Grillet. In the body of criticism concerning Robbe-Grillet the most frequent use of the term dehumanization refers to the descriptive technique in his novels and ciné-romans. Another concurrence on the part of both men's aesthetics appears to be that dehumanization and humanism are not mutually exclusive. The statement against humanism such as that made by Robbe-Grillet in Pour un nouveau roman is not attacking man but attacking man's cultural and intellectual anthropocentrism. As it manifests itself in the works of Robbe-Grillet, dehumanization is a process. It will be the purpose of this chapter to show not only examples of the preceding characteristics of the dehumanization process, but the literary significance of them.

In both Ortega's and Robbe-Grillet's aesthetics the term traditional appears frequently. Ortega says that the revolt against the traditional is a basic concept in dehumanization. He does not, however, really define the traditional. He does not specify whether or not traditional for him means the nineteenth century aesthetics or just prejudices that have developed through the centuries concerning the necessities of the artistic genre.

The following passage in which Ortega states that previously the interest was on what was being reproduced instead of form implies his concept of the traditional: "Se comprende, pues que el arte del siglo XIX haya sido tan popular: está hecho para la masa diferenciada en la proporción en que no es arte, sino extracto de vida. Recuérdese que en todas las épocas que han tenido dos tipos de diferentes de arte, uno para minorías y otro para la mayoría, este último fue siempre realista."<sup>1</sup>

The traditional in novelistic technique comprises several concepts such as time, point of view, and characterization. All of these concepts are governed by a basic common denominator that R. M. Albérès calls the "myth of reality": "Le cas du roman est bien particulier; car il ne s'est originalement développé que dans cette période où les arts furent progressivement séduits par le réalisme des formes. Plus que toute autre expression artistique, il se trouve 'engagé' dans l'optique réaliste, à laquelle il doit tout, et en premier lieu son développement, son succès et sa prééminence. Il appartient par ses origines,

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<sup>1</sup> José Ortega y Gasset, La deshumanización del arte (Madrid, 1925), p. 24.



sa croissance, et même par sa définition, à une civilisation (XVI<sup>e</sup>-XIX<sup>e</sup> siècles), qui s'intéresse au vrai plus qu'à l'art. . ."2

With the accent being placed on the element of verisimilitude, these concepts of plot, time, characterization and point of view must all conform to produce the "illusion of truth".

The fact that often the term story and novel are confused illustrates the point that the element of prime concern to the reader is what happened. This means that there must be a story that is clear and obvious to the reader.

Albérès calls these stories "une énorme production d'expériences vécues."3

Closely allied to the concept of plot is the concept of time. Sartre said very accurately in Situations that the great majority of contemporary authors each in his own way tried to destroy time.<sup>4</sup> The significance of this is that the concept of time that we have, that is, the unilinear concept of time, has been questioned by them. These contemporary authors have questioned chronological time, that is the human categorizations of time that have been imposed upon it. Thus, with respect to the traditional time is unilinear in nature and adheres to chronological time.

With respect to characterization, the personalities of the principle characters are given in detail in the traditional novel. This is reinforced by

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<sup>2</sup>R. M. Albérès, Histoire du roman moderne (Paris, 1962), p. 243.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 209.

<sup>4</sup>Jean Paul Sartre, Situations I (Paris, 1948), p. 77.

Alb  res' concept of the closed novel: "Il existe donc un roman 'ferm  ' et un roman 'ouvert'. Dans le roman 'ferm  ', l'histoire se suffit    elle-m  me, tout s'explique, et l'homme se regarde dans un miroir psychologique et social."<sup>5</sup>

The traditional concept of point of view is that the author does inform the reader fully of what is happening. He is all-knowing and all-powerful. In other words, in the traditional novel the reader is not called upon to bring anything to the work of art. "Le livre satisfait enti  rement l'esprit et la sensibilit  , il est une 'repr  sentation' parfaite o   le spectateur a   t   introduit, guid  , provoqu   et piqu   dans sa curiosit   et son int  r  t, et men   en fin de compte    une conclusion sans ambigu  t  , par laquelle le conte gardera pour lui un sens pr  cis. Il se sent enrichi d'une exp  rience, bien que fictive; il conna  t mieux maintenant les probl  mes de tel milieu social, ou du couple d  suni, et cette connaissance lui laisse une impression de satisfaction, et non d'inqui  tude."<sup>6</sup>

A very important element in the dehumanization process that most critics have neglected is the paradox of the traditional. The New Novel has not appeared in contemporary literature by spontaneous generation. Within its foundation there has to be a remnant of the traditional. At the same time one of the fundamental elements that Robbe-Grillet's aesthetic work, Pour un nouveau roman, and Ortega's La deshumanizaci  n del arte concur on is the concept that dehumanization means a revolt against the traditional. Perhaps

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<sup>5</sup>Alb  res, p. 238.

<sup>6</sup>Alb  res, p. 239.

this paradox of the traditional is the paradox of every new literary work.

In order to prove Robbe-Grillet's dehumanization and his works as also traditional, the term traditional must be further limited. For the purpose of this study anything that has been seen before in the novel could fall within the limits of the traditional practice in the novel. It does not make Robbe-Grillet's novels traditional novels to affirm that they contain something of the traditional. Thus, the paradox exists that Robbe-Grillet effects a revolt against the traditional novel all in not completely negating the traditional elements in his novels.

One way in which Robbe-Grillet is traditional is with respect to the art medium, the book. Robbe-Grillet himself attacks the socialist revolutionary novelists for not being revolutionary in form as well as content.<sup>7</sup> If one examines the book as an object, that is the traditional in type, lay-out, the arrangement of the printed word on the page, and the use of illustration, very little that could be called innovative is to be seen in Robbe-Grillet's novels.

It is obvious that Robbe-Grillet pays little respect to the division of the work into chapters. La Jalousie, Dans le labyrinthe, La Maison de rendez-vous, L'Immortelle, and L'Année dernière à Marienbad have no divisions that could be interpreted as chapter divisions although the works for the movies, the ciné-romans, are divided into scenes. Les Gommès, Robbe-Grillet's first novel is divided into rather long numbered parts that could be called chapters,

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<sup>7</sup>Alain Robbe-Grillet, Pour un nouveau roman (Paris, 1963), pp. 48-53.

and Le Voyeur is divided into two parts.

The fact that Robbe-Grillet avoids a division of his novels into chapters does not necessarily mean that he is breaking with the traditional. Chrétien de Troyes' romances do not have chapter divisions nor do the "chansons de geste", both of which must be considered direct ancestors of the novel. In the sixteenth century, the epic Gargantua y Pantagruel did have chapter divisions, but it must not be overlooked that in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the epistolary novel was "à la mode". The epistolary novel shows not only the disappearance of chapter divisions but more polyphony of plot than Robbe-Grillet's earlier novels with their chapter divisions.<sup>8</sup> Chapter divisions imply more of a categorization on the part of the author and an aid to the reader or a crutch for the reader, as the case might be, in seeing the work of art as the author intended it to be seen.

Robbe-Grillet's descriptive technique has been the most cited in critical remarks concerning the topic of dehumanization. Dehumanized description is plentiful in Robbe-Grillet's novels. These geometric descriptions are interpreted as dehumanized in that they demonstrate an obvious lack of pretense to imitate reality. They do not apply to reality because there is nothing in reality that really conforms to geometric dimensions. That is to say, there is very little in nature that is truly of a square, circular, or rectangular shape. The following passage from La Jalousie illustrates this technique:

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<sup>8</sup> Michel Butor, "Individu et Groupe dans le roman", Cahiers de l'Association Internationale des études françaises, XIV (March, 1962), p. 129.

"Maintenant l'ombre du pilier qui soutient l'angle correspondant de la terrasse."<sup>9</sup>

The terms "angle" and the last of the sentence "divise en deux parties égales", are both mathematical and geometric terms. Robbe-Grillet's Dans le labyrinthe is filled with geometric descriptions. There is a virtuoso description based on the variation on the theme of the circle in the first pages of the novel. A glass ash-tray leaves a circular stain on the table, and the lamp shade projects a circle of light on the ceiling.<sup>10</sup> "L'ensemble s'est changé en un simple trait filiforme, une ligne brisée, non fermée, comme un hexagone auquel manquerait un de ses côtés: l'image du filament incandescent de l'ampoule électrique. Ce petit polygone ouvert touche, par un de ses angles, le bord intérieur du vaste rond de lumière produit par la lampe. Il s'y déplace avec lenteur, mais d'un mouvement continu, tout au long de la circonférence."<sup>11</sup> (the underlining is mine)

In the description of the weather and the streets in this same novel the same geometric descriptions appear. The snow only falls vertically and the streets intersect at right angles. "Dehors il neige. Dehors il a neigé, il neigeait, dehors il neige. Les flocons serrés descendent doucement, dans une chute uniforme, ininterrompue, verticale cale--car il n'y a pas un souffle d'air--devant les hautes façades grises, dont ils empêchent de bien distinguer

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<sup>9</sup>Alain Robbe-Grillet, La Jalousie (Paris, 1957), p. 9.

<sup>10</sup>Alain Robbe-Grillet, Dans le labyrinthe (Paris, 1959), pp. 10-11.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 14.

la disposition, l'alignement des toits, la situation des ouvertures. Ce doivent être des rangées, toutes semblables de fenêtres régulières, se répétant à tous les niveaux, d'un bout à l'autre de la rue rectiligne."<sup>12</sup>

Even the objective correlative can be related to the concept of congruency, a process of finding figures congruent.<sup>13</sup>

Geometric descriptions, although they may be defined as something innovative are perhaps the most traditional of any that man has initiated, because the geometric descriptions that Robbe-Grillet uses in his novels are part of the traditional Euclidean geometry and part of the Greco-Christian traditions. When the earth is referred to as round, it is really a spheroid. The terms square, circle, and rectangle appear very frequently in everyday speech when they are scarcely applicable to nature. The geometric descriptive elements of Robbe-Grillet's works which are definitely dehumanized descriptions are related to the most common of techniques, the generalization.

Another way in which Robbe-Grillet's dehumanized descriptive technique is traditional is the fact that dehumanized as it is, it still is, and is recognizable as, a descriptive technique. Even though Robbe-Grillet limits himself to the surface of things, and never delves beneath the surface, and even though he excludes man from this world of things, the very fact that a recognizable descriptive technique is there, aligns this aspect of him with tradition in the

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<sup>12</sup>Dans le labyrinthe, pp. 14-15.

<sup>13</sup>Alain Robbe-Grillet, "Introduction" to La Jalousie (New York, 1963), p. 6.

novel.

Other manifestations of the traditional in Robbe-Grillet's descriptive technique are the numerous metaphors that are present in his fiction.<sup>14</sup> Yet another manifestation of the traditional in the category of descriptive technique is the fact that a very rich prose style can be found in his works. A very obvious example of this can be seen in the opening pages of La Maison de rendez-vous.

La chair des femmes a toujours occupé, sans doute, une grande place dans mes rêves. Même à l'état de veille, ses images ne cessent de m'assaillir. Une fille en robe d'été qui offre sa nuque courbée-- elle rattache sa sandale--la chevelure à demi renversée découvrant la peau fragile et son duvet blond, je la vois aussitôt soumise à quelque complaisance, tout de suite excessive. L'étroite jupe entravée, fendue jusqu'aux cuisses, des élégantes de Hong-Kong se déchire d'un coup sous une main violente, qui dénude soudain la hanche arrondie, ferme, lisse, brillante, et la tendre chute des reins. Le fouet de cuir, dans la vitrine d'un sellier parisien, les seins exposés des mannequin de cire, une affiche de spectacle, la réclame pour des jarretelles ou pour un parfum, deux lèvres humides, disjointes, un bracelet de fer, un collier à chien, dressent autour de moi leur décor insistant, provocateur.<sup>15</sup>

Related to the richness of prose in the preceding paragraph is the presence of alliteration in this opening passage from La Maison de rendez-vous. The notable predominance of [ʃ] and [z] sounds is well recognized as supporting a secretive, suspenseful atmosphere in a poem or prose.<sup>16</sup> On another

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<sup>14</sup>Valerie Minogue, "The Workings of Fiction in Les Gommages", Modern Language Review, LXII (July, 1967), p. 431.

<sup>15</sup>Alain Robbe-Grillet, La Maison de rendez-vous (Paris, 1965), pp. 11-12.

<sup>16</sup>Elizabeth Drew, Poetry; A Modern Guide to Its Understanding and Enjoyment (New York, 1959), p. 41.

level, the combination of eroticism and cruelty is in the tradition of the Marquis de Sade.

The New Novel has also been said to react against traditional psychology, and support of this statement can be found in the relatively meager amount of literary criticism devoted to character analysis in Robbe-Grillet's novels. In fact, the only trace of criticism approaching character analysis in the body of criticism concerning Robbe-Grillet's novels is the evaluation of the protagonists of his novels as psychotic characters afflicted with an obsession or sexual perversion. Another possibility is that these characters are suffering from a nervous disorder of an internal physiological nature.<sup>17</sup>

This lack of characterization can very obviously be included in a description of the dehumanization process as it works in Robbe-Grillet's novels. The characters in Robbe-Grillet's novels are merely shadows of human beings. A very exterior manifestation of this point can be seen in the names of many of Robbe-Grillet's characters. Never is the last name of a protagonist stated in any of the novels, and many times as in L'Immortelle, La Jalousie and L'Année dernière à Marienbad the protagonist is reduced to a mere letter such as A or X or N.

This dehumanization in characterization also demonstrates the paradox of the traditional. The most elementary concept related to this element of the traditional in the area of characterization is the fact that characters do exist

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<sup>17</sup> Rosanne Weil-Malherbe, "Le Voyeur de Robbe-Grillet. Un cas d'épilepsie du type psychomoteur," French Review (February, 1965), pp. 469-476.



in these novels. A characterization is always a logical system based on given psychological data, because no exact information is conveyed to the reader. This fact is true. However, the subject of all Robbe-Grillet's novels is not a particular character's psychological characteristics, but the perception of outward phenomena by a character or characters, and in some cases the reader cannot even be sure who that character is. Le Voyeur, although it is told from the third person point of view, is at least in sympathy with only Mathias; perception. Much of Les Gommages shows Wallas' reconstruction of the murder scene. La Jalousie is devoted to the perception by a jealous man of things, events, and people who he knows and loves.

Not just Robbe-Grillet's novels but the New Novel in general has been called the phenomenological novel.<sup>18</sup> What is more important than traditional psychology in the tradition of the "étude des passions" which goes back to La Princesse de Clèves is perception, the way that certain things or experiences strike the human conscience. This in itself is psychology and Robbe-Grillet's novels do contain psychological analyses on the level of perception. Because of the fact, then, that a type of psychological analysis does exist in Robbe-Grillet's novels, its presence there is a basis for calling this another evidence that there is still the traditional in Robbe-Grillet's novels and in this dehumanized descriptive technique.

Another element in Robbe-Grillet's dehumanized technique with respect

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<sup>18</sup>Laurent LeSage, The New Novel, An Introduction and a Sampler (Pennsylvania, 1962), p. 16.

to the novel is the fact that there is a story in all of Robbe-Grillet's novels. The fact that the story is not elaborated upon in the nineteenth century tradition can be considered part of the new dehumanized technique characteristic of Robbe-Grillet's style. At the same time, the fact that each novel does have a story of some type even if it is not recognizable in the usual form connects it with the traditional. The term story or plot will be taken in the loosest possible meaning of the word, that something happens. In Les Gommages, the basic construction is that of the detective story in the tradition of Sherlock Holmes and Mickey Spilane. All of his novels do center around a violent act. Le Voyeur concerns the murder and possible rape of a young girl. La Maison de rendez-vous concerns the murder of a young man and the possibility of a cannibalistic act being committed. L'Immortelle concerns the death of a young woman. Dans le labyrinthe concerns the death of a soldier in time of war, and L'Année dernière à Marienbad concerns adultery with the possibility of rape. For the purpose of a novel or a short story, the moment that an event occurs and it is recounted, then a story has been composed. Thus, in all of Robbe-Grillet's novels there are stories and plots. These stories are not exactly like a story from Balzac or Zola, but they are stories or plots, and all traditional novels have plots as has been previously established.

Time does not appear in Robbe-Grillet's novels in the traditional sense. In the traditional novel from its ancestor, the chanson de geste through Chrétien de Troyes and Balzac and Zola, time was presented in these novels in terms of chronological time. In other words, time in the sense of chronological time is a form of anthropocentrism in that the time of clocks and watches is a

human categorization or system. Thus, dehumanization can be said to manifest itself with respect to time in that clock time is not referred to in any of Robbe-Grillet's novels. The closest thing to chronological time in Robbe-Grillet's novels could be the shadows cast from the pillars of the plantation and their length in La Jalousie. Roland Barthes was very perceptive in noticing that the repeated scenes that showed a slight change in spatial order, such as the shots of the bedroom at different intervals in L'Année dernière à Marienbad, are indicating a progression or at least a change in time.<sup>19</sup> If this were accepted as true, then time does exist in Robbe-Grillet's works. The only adverbial expressions that are indicative of time in the anthropocentric sense are the word "maintenant" which occurs frequently in Dans le labyrinthe and in Les Gommages. Thus time does exist in the dehumanized form in Robbe-Grillet's works. There are other traditional or fixed types of time that apply to all novels and to Robbe-Grillet's novels as well. First, there is the time of the work itself, how long it would take the reader to read the novel, and in the case of the *ciné-roman* how long it would take to view the film. John Sturrock says that Robbe-Grillet keeps one element in his treatment of time after the traditional. "Moreover, the one chronological sequence that Robbe-Grillet does permit is still a conventional one; the scenes of one of his novels or film-scripts would pass through his (or anyone's) mind far quicker than they can once they are transposed into words or even pictures. Robbe-Grillet's novels, like those of Claude Simon, purport to be instantaneous, but since the rhythm of their composition

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<sup>19</sup>See Roland Barthes, Essais Critiques (Paris, 1964).

has in fact been set by the inclinations and working habits of the novelist, it is clear that a lot of room remains for artifice."<sup>20</sup>

Philippe Sénart in an article against Robbe-Grillet laments the fact that Robbe-Grillet is trying to "refaire le monde sans l'homme."<sup>21</sup> The expression "sans l'homme" from this passage implies the concept of dehumanization, and it is the other word "monde" which will conclude this discussion of the paradox of the traditional in Robbe-Grillet's novels. Until this point the present author has admitted the dissimilarity between Robbe-Grillet's technique and that of Balzac, but has questioned the use of Balzac's technique as a criterion for defining the traditional elements of the novel. However, at this point the dehumanized world of Robbe-Grillet can be compared positively to that of Balzac. Although it is a dehumanized one, Robbe-Grillet's works constitute a literary world in itself, a separate entity. That is to say that all of his novels and cine-romans combine to form a large epic work.

All of Balzac's novels combine to form La Comédie humaine, and in this Comédie humaine many characters appear and reappear. An example of this is the character Vautrin alias Trompe-la-Mort from Balzac's Père Goriot who becomes the priest Herrera at the end of Les Illusions Perdues, and who is a principal character in La Splendeur et la misère des courtisanes. The ensemble of Chretien de Troyes's works also creates a world similar to the world of the Comédie humaine. His works create a world around the court of King Arthur

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<sup>20</sup> John Sturrock, The French New Novel (London, 1969), p. 188.

<sup>21</sup> Philippe Sénart, "Un humanisme truqué," Table Ronde CXCIII (February, 1964), p. 104.

of medieval England in which the same characters reappear from work to work such as Sir Kay, Sir Gawain, King Arthur, and Queen Guinevere.

This same element can be seen in Robbe-Grillet's novels. Although the protagonists in Robbe-Grillet's novels appear under inaccurate names or no names at all, they all seem to be very similar in that they all demonstrate a strong obsession. Mathias, from Le Voyeur, by the information provided in the novel, is a violent sadist or at least a sexual deviate. Most of this is hinted at, but the reader never sees Mathias really commit a crime. The obsessions of Mathias are evident in the text, however. He has obsessions on the object level. Having a passion for the figure of eight, Mathias seems to perceive this form over and over during the course of the novel.

The objective correlative quality of the recurring character in Balzac's novels is similar to the character treatment in Robbe-Grillet's novels and reinforces the idea that the concept of the objective correlative is part of the paradox of the traditional.

There is one slight difference between the traditional form of character recurrence and that of Robbe-Grillet's technique which is basically a part of the dehumanization process. The characters in Robbe-Grillet's novels rarely have names at all. The objective correlative procedure concerning characters occurs not by details of name in Robbe-Grille's works because these factors aren't important to his novelistic form. There is first the objective correlative of characterization with respect to character types. An example of this is the child. The child is a character that recurs in Robbe-Grillet's novels. Every time that a child character appears in Robbe-Grillet's novels, if the character

is a major one in the work and is delineated at all, it shows the same basic characteristics.

A very detailed sketch of the young child as a character is in La Plage, one of Robbe-Grillet's Instantanées. In this work, three children are playing on the beach. A very important characteristic of this description and of the several other descriptions of children in Robbe-Grillet's novels is the alienation of these characters from the rest of their surrounding. First, like many of the other characters, excepting the protagonists, these children are described as objects, in objective detail. Also in this novel, the children are in a secluded place, alienated from the rest of the world. In short, the child-characters in Robbe-Grillet's works are alienated: from the observer--both the novelist or the character perceiving the action, and by extension, the reader if one accepts the premise proposed by Robbe-Grillet that the reader creates the work of art and shares in the creative process by reading.

These three children in La Plage are objective correlatives of themselves because they are described in the same fashion, and except for the slight difference in size, they look alike. The first section of La Plage starts with the expression "trois enfants". They look the same and are the same age. They are dressed the same, and their hair is the same color.<sup>22</sup> They are reflections of each other. They are also objective correlatives of their milieu. In the following passage the three children are described in terms of their barren surroundings and their surroundings are described in terms of them. The children

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<sup>22</sup>Alain Robbe-Grillet, Instantanées (Paris, 1962), p. 63.

are described in geometric terms, and the scene is described in the same version, in terms of human epithets: "Ils sont habillés tous les trois de la même façon, culotte courte et chemisette, l'une et l'autre en grosse toile d'un bleu délavé. Ils marchent côte à côte, se tenant par la main, en ligne droite, parallèlement à la mer et parallèlement à la falaise, presque à égale distance des deux, un peu plus près de l'eau pourtant. Le soleil au zénit, ne laisse pas d'ombre à leur pied. . . . Devant eux le sable est tout à fait vierge, jaune et lisse depuis le rocher jusqu'à l'eau."<sup>23</sup>

There is also another objective correlative of these children from La Plage in the other short piece from the Instantanées. This occurs in Le remplaçant. The scene described is a classroom in which a teacher is attempting to teach a reading lesson. Although there is no direct exposition of conflict between the teacher and the student, there is an alienation evident of the teacher from the young students. The following passage depicts this alienation and lack of communication between the student and the teacher:

"Eh bien, continuez! Il n'y a pas de point. Vous avez l'air de ne rien comprendre à ce que vous lisez." L'enfant regarda le maître, et au delà, un peu sur la droite, le pantin de papier blanc.

"Est-ce que vous comprenez, oui ou non?"

"Oui, dit l'enfant d'une voix mal assurée."

"Oui, monsieur, corrigea le répétiteur."

"Oui, monsieur, répéta l'enfant."

Le répétiteur regarda le texte dans son livre et demanda:

"Que signifie pour vous le mot 'alibi'?"

L'enfant regarda le bonhomme de papier découpé, puis le mur nu, droit devant lui, puis le livre sur son pupitre: et de nouveau le mur, pendant près d'une minute.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>Instantanées, p. 64.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., pp. 17-18.

The objective correlative of these two descriptions of the child character is the little boy in Le Voyeur whose name is Julien Marek. The important element in this novel that illuminates the relationship between Julien and Mathias is the meeting between them toward the end of the novel. Again this child appears alien especially to Mathias because he has considerable control over Mathias. From the evidence in the text, Julien saw Mathias commit a crime, or at least he leads Mathias to believe that he has seen him commit a crime. The important element in this situation is that Julien and Mathias are alien because Julien is a potential harm to Mathias. The fact that Julien claims to have seen the crime isolates him from every other character in the novel. The following paragraph shows that he knew of the crime:

Une autre interprétation s'imposait: ne désirait-il pas plutôt, par ce geste spectaculaire, faire savoir, qu'il garderait le silence, que le coupable percé à jour n'aurait rien à craindre de lui? Son attitude étrange, à la forme paternelle, n'avait pas d'autre explication. La comme ici, il proclamait son pouvoir sur Mathias: il détruisait ses traces avec la même facilité qu'il lui en suscitait de nouvelles, modifiant à son gré signes et itinéraires du temps révolu. Mais il fallait autre chose que des soupçons--même précis--pour autoriser une telle assurance. Julien avait "vu". Le nier ne servait plus à rien. Seules les images enregistrées par ces yeux, pour toujours, leur conféraient désormais cette fixité insupportable.<sup>25</sup>

The interesting element in this story is that Mathias expects the boy to denounce him to the police. This is yet further proof of the alien quality of the child as a character in Robbe-Grillet's novels. What further removes the child-character from the rest of the story is the fact that from the novel it appears that Julien has not denounced Mathias in spite of his knowledge of the

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<sup>25</sup>Alain Robbe-Grillet, Le Voyeur (Paris, 1955), p. 214.



crime. The child's demeanor during the meeting which was very cold and seemingly analytical sets him apart from the rest of the story. Thus, the three children from La Plage and Julien from Le Voyeur are reflections of one another not only because of the fact that they are children, but because of their being alien with respect to other men, or man in general.

There is another objective correlative of the child character in Dans le labyrinthe. This is the nameless boy in the novel described in the outside descriptions of the novel. As in the descriptions of the child in Le Voyeur and Le Remplaçant, the child in Dans le labyrinthe is depicted in hostile or at least noncommunicant terms. The following description shows this alienation: "Le gamin ne dit toujours rien. Ses yeux ont quitté le soldat pour se porter vers le bout de la rue, dans la direction que l'homme a indiquée d'un signe de tête; il y voit seulement la succession des lumières alignées, de plus en plus rapprochées, de moins en moins brillantes, qui se perdent dans la nuit."<sup>26</sup>

The age of the children in La Plage is given as around twelve years, "une douzaine d'années".<sup>27</sup> In Dans le labyrinthe, the child whose name is not mentioned is approximately the same age, "de dix ou douze ans".<sup>28</sup> Thus, from the evidence given in this portion of the study of characters there does appear to be redoublement or the objective correlative of the character in the tradition of the recurring character in the traditional novel. This redoublement

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<sup>26</sup>Dans le labyrinthe, p. 35

<sup>27</sup>Instantanées, p. 63.

<sup>28</sup>Dans le labyrinthe, p. 50.

of the character or characters reappearance also shows that Robbe-Grillet's novels constitute a world of their own which is also a characteristic of the traditional novel.

In Robbe-Grillet's novels there are also objective correlatives of inanimate objects that are repeated throughout the ensemble of his works. Birds occur twice in Robbe-Grillet's novels. First, there are repeated descriptions of birds in Le Voyeur. Also, in La Plage, there is a description of a group of birds: "Devant eux, une troupe d'oiseaux de mer arpente le rivage, juste a la limite des vagues. Ils progressent parallelement a la marche des enfants, dans le meme sens que ceux-ci, a une centaine de metres environ. Main, comme les oiseaux vont beaucoup moins vite, les enfants se rapprochent d'eux."<sup>29</sup>

John Sturrock has pointed out that erasers exist in novels other than Les Gommes. In La Jalousie, for example, the husband tries to erase the mark of the centepede from the wall with an eraser and there is a drawer full of erasers in L'Immortelle.<sup>30</sup> The circle exists from novel to novel forming a unifying element within the totality of the novels. The circle exists in Dans le labyrinthe as a description of the lamp, the light it reflects upon the ceiling, and the marks made by a glass on the table-cloth. The circle reappears in Le Voyeur in the figure eight objective correlative which has been interpreted as

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<sup>29</sup>Instantanées, pp. 66-67.

<sup>30</sup>Sturrock, p. 225.

a double circle.<sup>31</sup> The circle has an objective correlative also in the circular structure of Les Gommes, in the fact that the novel ends as it begins, with the death of Dupont. This circular structure has an objective correlative in the circular structure of Le Voyeur.

All of Robbe-Grillet's works take place in a very limited environment, and in many cases, there exists doublement of the geographical milieu. Le Voyeur takes place on an island. The objective correlative of this is that in La Maison de rendez-vous, Hong Kong is referred to as an island. Les Gommes does not take place on an island but it does take place in a limited area, a city which is surrounded by water, or containing canals. L'Immortelle takes place in the city of Istamboul. L'Année dernière à Marienbad takes place in a city but within the confines of the grounds of a resort hotel. Of the Instantanées, Le Mannequin, Scène Dans les couloirs du Metropolitain, La Chambre secrète and Le Remplaçant take place in limited areas, within a structure, a room. The others, Le Chemin de retour, La Plage, and La Mauvaise direction are landscapes in which water appears in all three pieces as a part of the scene and a delineating factor in it.

Another element that shows that Robbe-Grillet's novels constitute a totality is the fact that many of the scenes from the stories coincide with each other, or are objective correlatives of each other. Les Gommes begins with theatrical terminology as if a play were about to start, and this corresponds to

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<sup>31</sup> Ludovic Janvier, Une Parole exigeante (Paris, 1964), p. 222.

the short work Scene from the Instantanées. "Quand le rideau s'ouvre, la première chose que l'on aperçoit depuis la salle--entre les pans de velours rouge que s'écartent avec lenteur--la première chose que l'on aperçoit est un personnage vu de dos, assis à sa table de travail au milieu de la scène vivement éclairée."<sup>32</sup>

The vocabulary and the content of Le Chemin de retour is almost the same as that of Le Voyeur: "Une fois franchie la ligne de rochers qui jusque-là nous barrait la vue, nous avons aperçu de nouveau la terre ferme, la colline au bois de pins, les deux maisonnettes blanches et le bout de route en pente douce par où nous étions arrivés. Nous avons fait le tour de l'île."<sup>33</sup>

The line of rocks appears also in Le Voyeur. The little white houses also appear in Le Voyeur, as well as the steep path. Another very obvious objective correlative in Robbe-Grillet's description is the stain. A good example of this occurs in La Chambre secrète: "C'est d'abord une tâche rouge, d'un rouge, vif brillant, mais sombre, aux ombres presque noires. Elle forme une rosace irrégulière, aux contours nets, qui s'étend de plusieurs côtés en larges coulées de longueurs inégales, se divisant et s'amenuisant ensuite jusqu'à devenir de simples filets sinueux."<sup>34</sup>

The more famous description in terms of the stain which is an objective correlative of this descriptive word is found in La Jalousie. The mark left by

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<sup>32</sup>Instantanées, p. 51.

<sup>33</sup>Instantanées, p. 51.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 97.

the centipede is described in La Jalousie by the stain: "Du reste, elle n'était déjà plus tournée vers Franck, à ce moment-là. Elle venait de ramener la tête dans l'axe de la table et regardait droit devant soi, en direction du mur nu, ou une tâche noirâtre marque l'emplacement du mille-pattes écrasé la semaine dernière, au début du mois, le mois précédent peut-être, ou plus tard."<sup>35</sup>

The objective correlative of this use of the descriptive expression of the stain can be seen in the same novel where Franck's shirt is described as a white stain: "Ce qu'on est bien là-dedans! Sa chemise blanche fait une tâche plus pâle dans la nuit, contre le mur de la maison."<sup>36</sup>

A minor objective correlative of this technique of using the stain is the fact that in Dans le labyrinthe, the glass made a circular stain on the tablecloth.

As it has been shown, Robbe-Grillet's dehumanized works demonstrate a paradox. They have some traditional elements to be seen, but at the same time the essential common denominator of dehumanization is the revolt against the traditional. The other half of this paradox has been more faithfully treated by critics.

An obvious reaction against traditional characterization which is also linked to the dehumanized characters in Robbe-Grillet's works is the fact that there is not a wide diversity in character types. The child character, discussed

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<sup>35</sup>La Jalousie, p. 27.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 58.

in detail in the first part of this chapter, is one of these types. The other two character types include the one who tortures or inflicts pain, either willingly or unwillingly, and the one who receives pain or who is hurt. A simplified version of this relationship expressed in all of the novels is that of the dominant and the dominated either physically or psychologically. Perhaps the most complicated of these oversimplified relationships is that of La Jalousie. In this novel, because of the emotion involved in the novel of the same name, it is hard to determine who is the dominant one in the relationship between the three main characters in the novel. It is the opinion of the present author that the wife, A, and Franck are the dominant characters, and the narrator is the dominated one. In L'Année dernière à Marienbad X is the dominate character and he is dominating A. In L'Immortelle there is a mutual domination. The girl, L, is physically dominated because from the text of the ciné-roman, she has been murdered. There is also further evidence of physical domination in a very erotic scene which could be interpreted as sexual domination. N is dominated by L psychologically, because he appears to have an obsession for seeing her again and again. In the remainder of the novels the rest of the dominant and dominated relationship exists on the physical level. In Le Voyeur, Mathias physically dominates the young girl, Jacqueline, by torturing and killing her. In Dans le labyrinthe, there is only the soldier who appears to be dominated more by his task and his illness than any other character in the novel. La Maison de rendez-vous contains the character Ralph Johnson who physically dominates Edouard Manneret by murder, and as in the preceding novels, there is also the undertone in this novel of sexual perversion.

These characters in Robbe-Grillet's world are often controlled by obsessions. Mathias from Le Voyeur was quite obviously obsessed with young girls, as Didier Anzieu proves in his article "Le discours de l'obsessionnel dans les romans de Robbe-Grillet". The "je" narrator of La Maison de rendez-vous relates, "la chair de femmes a toujours occupé sans doute, une grande place dans mes rêves."<sup>37</sup> In La Jalousie, the husband through whose eyes the reader observes the events of the novel is obsessed with the possible love affair between Franck, a friend of the family, and A, the narrator's wife. All of these characters are obsessed with or are searching for something. Wallas is searching for the murderer of Dupont in Les Gommages. Much of L'Immortelle is N in search of L. The soldier in Dans le labyrinthe was in search of an army companion's father to whom he was to give this friend's last belongings. In L'Année dernière à Marienbad, X is trying to recapture a period of time in the past, or perhaps, to capture a period of time that had never existed at all. Even Mathias from Le Voyeur was in search of financial fortune.

With respect to characterization, the new character appears to be dehumanized because the contemporary character is merely a shadow of its ancestor, the character of Balzac's invention. It must not be said that this character is less human than that of the nineteenth century novelist merely because of the fact that the character in twentieth century fiction does not possess the same number of epithets as his nineteenth century counterpart. It must be remembered that the term traditional is not a fixed one, and one could

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<sup>37</sup> La Maison de rendez-vous, p. 11.

include Chrétien de Troyes or the old chansons de geste in discussing the traditional. If one considers these two elements in discussing the traditional in Robbe-Grillet, it is obvious that in Chrétien's works most of the knights and ladies resemble each other in that they are all fair and amiable, and really little else is given in detail concerning physical appearance. Even less was given in the chansons de geste. At this level, description rarely deviated from the stock epithet. The argument that the traditional novel was more or less subjective or objective would have no value in this discussion of characterization. The main difference between the novel, that is all the types of novels mentioned previously, is that these novels or ancestors of the novel possess all the data concerning the main characters on the printed page. Robbe-Grillet's novels are different in that what is on the page constitutes only one portion of the novel. Robbe-Grillet has stated that it is the reader who is the creator of the novel. The nineteenth century novel is present in its entirety on the white page, whereas the novel characteristic of Robbe-Grillet is only present on the page in its dehumanized form. This is the objectivized form of the novel and the characters in this form of the novel are the objectivized forms of the characters. Since, for Robbe-Grillet, it is in the mind of the reader, or in the case of the *ciné-roman*, in the mind of the spectator that the work of art is created, the conception of the work in the mind of the observer being its realization provides an infinite field of possibilities depending upon the person participating in the artistic process. Thus the multiplicity of subjective realities provides for objectivity. Consequently, characterization for the characters in Robbe-Grillet's works consists of a sketch of the character, the shading and



color not to be enumerated ad infinitum as in the manner of Balzac. This can be seen in the use of color in Robbe-Grillet's works in which only darks and lights are used.<sup>38</sup> In La Jalousie the principal character, the protagonist, has been described by Bruce Morrissette as the "je-néant". This because the "je" is never used throughout the novel and yet the story is told from the point of view of a person consumed by jealousy. The reader perceiving the work recreates this point of view of the jealous observer and becomes the "je-néant". If the pronoun "je" had existed in the novel with any frequency referring to the protagonist then the reader would be observing the character-narrator saying "je", and this would astracize the reader from the creative process in the novel.<sup>39</sup>

This same skeletal element of Robbe-Grillet's characters occurs in Dans le labyrinthe in which another character is trying to relive the feelings and perceptions of a soldier who dies in his presence. Proof of this possibility can be founded on the number of spontaneous interjections of the word "non" which punctuates the dialogue. This could mean that the character speculating on the sensations of the soldier is correcting himself.<sup>40</sup> If this very possible theory were accepted, then the decor or whichever character it is who attempts to reconstruct the soldier's sensations is a type of "je-néant" also. Even if the

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<sup>38</sup>Marie Georgette Steisel, "Etude des couleurs dans La Jalousie, French Review, XXXVIII (February, 1965), pp. 485-496.

<sup>39</sup>Bruce Morrissette, Les romans de Robbe-Grillet (Paris, 1963), pp. 111-147.

<sup>40</sup>B. T. McIlvain, "Point of View in Three Contemporary Works of Fiction," (PhD. dissertation, Indiana University, 1968).

pronoun were used in this récit it would not change this kind of "je-néant" because the "je" would not stand for the narrator who is reconstructing the sensations of the soldier, but the doctor's speculation of the soldier's psyche, in other words, a "je" that stands for nothing.

The plot in Robbe-Grillet's novels also demonstrates a revolt against the traditional in its dehumanized form. The traditional nineteenth century novel had a linear plot. This could be attributed to the fact that originally history was a more prestigious genre than the novel, and in their early beginnings many novels claimed historical authenticity for the sake of prestige. For this reason the plot of the novel was told very much after the fashion of the history. The linearity of plot can be easily related to time as a human categorization with no a priori reason for existence. The words used to distinguish separate units of time show man's linear concept of time. Tomorrow, the day after tomorrow and yesterday, the day before yesterday, the word "ago" plus any time expression or "from now on" all would be equated to points on a straight line. Michel Butor, in his article, "Individu et groupe dans le roman" says that polyphonic construction is the logical following of the linear plot.<sup>41</sup> Dehumanization is at the base of the polyphony of construction which Butor was referring to. The plot in the linear proportions is man-centered just as chronological time is linear and man-centered also. Robbe-Grillet is reacting against the traditional in presenting a plot that is the opposite of linear, that is to say, polyphonic.

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<sup>41</sup> Michel Butor, "Individu et Groupe dans le roman", Cahiers de l'Association Internationale des Etudes Françaises, XIV (March, 1962), p. 129.

In his article about the cine-roman L'Immortelle, "Robbe-Grillet, L'Immortelle, and the Novel: Reality, Nothingness and Imagination", Ben Stolfuz describes the plot on two separate levels. One level is N's construction and reconstruction of his own reality. In other words, by negating the reality established by N, the author "interpolates another reality throughout this ciné-roman."<sup>42</sup>

In Les Gommages, the polyphonic structure of the plot takes a different form. There are basically three different parts to the plot of the novel. One part is that of Wallas and his quest for the murderer of Dupont. The second level is that of Dupont and the doctor who are conspiring to make a certain group of political assassins believe that he is dead. The third level of the narrative is the level of the conspirators Garinatti and Bonaventure. The juxtaposition of these separate narratives in the novel negates each of them. To Wallas, Dupont is dead, but Dupont is not dead, and yet Bonaventure is content because he has read in the newspaper that Dupont is dead. This negation of the individual narratives by each other manifests what could be termed a circular structure in which one reality destroys another.

Closely related to plot is point of view, and polyphony of plot easily incorporates the concept of point of view as well. In Le Voyeur there exists a split in the point of view. There is one narrative level, that of the observer of Mathias. Then there is evidence that on another level there are Mathias'

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<sup>42</sup>Ben Stolfus, "Robbe-Grillet, L'Immortelle, and the Novel: Reality, Nothingness, and Imagination", L'Esprit créateur, VII (Summer, 1967), p. 129.

imaginings of what has happened. The following lines show that what Mathias observes is treated on one level. "Il restait trop longtemps dans les boutiques. Il y entraît avec plaisir--parce qu'on y accède directement depuis la route, comme dans les habitations campagnardes--et chaque fois il lui fallait attendre de longues minutes à cause des chalands, pour n'éprouver à la fin que des mécomptes."<sup>43</sup>

A few pages later in a description of a little girl, Jacqueline, it is what Mathias observes or hallucinates that is recounted from inside his own psyche. It has been said by one critic that Mathias has an obsession or is suffering from a nervous disorder, thus preventing him from a good accurate perception of anything.<sup>44</sup>

Ce n'était pas Violette, évidemment, mais une personne qui lui ressemblait en tout cas beaucoup; de visage surtout, car le costume de celle-ci montrait qu'elle était encore une enfant, malgré les formes naissantes de son corps qui auraient pu déjà appartenir à une jeune fille de taille réduite. Elle portait ses habits de tous les jours--ceux d'une petite paysanne--détail qui étonnait, car on n'a pas l'habitude à la campagne de prendre ainsi des instantanées pour les faire agrandir: les photos y commémorent d'ordinaire quelque événement et se font en robe du dimanche (de communiant, en général, à cet âge-là). Violette au contraire se tenait adossée au tronc rectiligne d'un pin, la tête appuyée contre l'écorce, les jambes raides et légèrement écartées, les bras ramenés en arrière. Sa posture, mélange ambigu d'abandon et de contrainte, pouvait laisser croire qu'on l'avait attachée à l'arbre.<sup>45</sup>

The preceding passage shows very clearly that these are Mathias' hallucinations

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<sup>43</sup>Le Voyeur, p. 72.

<sup>44</sup>Weil-Malherbe, pp. 469-476.

<sup>45</sup>Le Voyeur, p. 83.

about the photograph.

In L'Année dernière à Marienbad, there is the intrigue level of the present versus the past. There are first, the assertions made by an individual, X, and at the same time the woman's negation of them. This is similar to the form of polyphony of plot construction in Les Gommès.

In La Maison de rendez-vous there is polyphony of point of view in much the same way as in Dans le labyrinthe. There is one level of the narrative told from the first person. "Souvent je m'attarde à contempler quelque jeune femme qui danse dans un bal. Je préfère qu'elle ait les épaules nues, et aussi, qu'elle se retourne, la naissance de la gorge."<sup>46</sup>

Besides the level of the story told in the first person which gives the reader a separate autobiographical story within the novel, is the level of the narrative in which the "je" of the story attempts to reconstruct in his mind the actions of the murderer.

In La Jalousie, there is only one level of the narrative. There is destruction of the constructions in the mind of the "je-néant" narrator. There are suggestions in the novel that the narrator is interpreting pessimistically the relationship between his wife and Franck.

Another element that governs dehumanization of character and plot is ambiguity. This can be easily explained in terms of dehumanization. Olga Bernal, in her critical work, Robbe-Grillet; Le Roman de l'absence, defines human in the following way: "Pour l'Européen, l'humain c'est une synthèse

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<sup>46</sup>La Maison de rendez-vous, p. 12.

d'ideologies greco-chretiennes a caractere anthropocentrique."<sup>47</sup> A great foundation for these Greco-Christian ideologies is Aristotle. Aristotle has such prestige in the western world today that even his Poetics is still used in literary criticism. Harold Wylie in his article "The Reality Game of Robbe-Grillet" states the same thing; that Robbe-Grillet "rejects the contours of Aristotelian logic, specifically the law of the excluded third (a thing cannot be something and not be something at the same time)."<sup>48</sup>

Although Wylie does not call this common practice of Robbe-Grillet's dehumanization, a similar reference was made in Chapter II in Ortega's La deshumanización del arte. The acceptance of a multiplicity of realities is not just a rejection of the Aristotelian law of the excluded third. This concept appears to go beyond it.

Evidences of this advance beyond Aristotelian logic can be seen in Robbe-Grillet's novels. Often a character is seen or referred to by more than one name as with L in L'Immortelle, or the character will be named and then this name will be negated further on in the text. An example of this is Jean Robin of Le Voyeur, who is really not Jean Robin at all. The numerous variations and ambiguities in all Robbe-Grillet's novels which are often equally plausible reinforce the concept of several realities. In Le Voyeur many critics seem sure that Mathias tortured and killed Jacqueline the shepherdess. This fact is not

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<sup>47</sup> Olga Bernal, Le roman de l'absence (Paris, 1964), p. 25.

<sup>48</sup> Harold A. Wylie, "The Reality Game of Robbe-Grillet", French Review, XL (May, 1967), p. 776.

really verifiable in the printed text. Only the small boy implies that Mathias committed the crime. From the text there are several possibilities as to what really happened in the story. One is that Mathias only took pleasure in imagining overt sadistic acts. Mathias does not admit to killing the girl in the novel. It is very possible that he never did commit the act and that Julien is an accomplice in this strange obsession of Mathias. Another and the most accepted possibility is that it all happened as Julien insinuates it did, and that he did see the incident. The other possibility is that Mathias really did commit the crime, but believes that he did not because of a nervous disorder or some psychological malady. It is also possible that he did not commit the crime but believes that he has after Julien implies that he has. All of the preceding possibilities as deduced from the text are true. This of course violates the traditional Aristotelian "law of the excluded third". If one departs from the basic premise established previously that the novel is created in the mind of the reader or the spectator, then there are as many "true" and valid versions of the novel as there are human consciousnesses to perceive the work. All of these possible versions present a multiplicity of realities super-imposed upon each other.

Similarly, in La Maison de rendez-vous there are several equal possibilities available to the reader. First, the reader could affirm that the flesh of the young girl was eaten and that Sir Ralphe, from what is given in the text, did kill Edouard Manneret. Since the narrator states in the novel that he is reconstructing, the events recounted in the story could not be as true a picture of what really happened as the reader might think. They could all be

a deliberate falsification on the part of the narrator, or merely the fruit of a very vivid imagination. It could also be said that the murder didn't happen at all through the faulty perception or the hallucination of the narrator.

This law of the excluded third allows for a great number of possibilities and valid interpretations of the plot. Perhaps what is referred to as the plot in the traditional novel would find a better term in the expression "the range of possibilities."

All of the preceding aspects of dehumanization should be viewed in perspective. Dehumanization in any of its manifestations is part of a dehumanization-humanization process that affirms a new humanism.

The character with respect to the narrator or principle character is, in Robbe-Grillet's novels, partially on the printed page and only completely created in the mind of the individual reader. The other characters are never existant with the detail that a traditional nineteenth century character is in Balzac's novels. These characters are born of Balzac in their entirety. Robbe-Grillet's characters are only silhouettes because they will be given color and become three dimensional in the mind of the reader. The human mind cannot imagine another character in a one dimensional form. Man has the tendency or weakness, whatever the case might be, to categorize and to create systems out of chaos; being unable to face the infinity of the universe he must hide behind the safety of categorization and logical systems. Man is limited.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Jorge Luis Borges, "Límites", Nueva antología personal (Buenos Aires, 1968), pp. 40-41.



For this reason, Robbe-Grillet's characters are one-dimensional. They are on only one plane, that of the printed page. With the traditional categorization, the novelist categorized the interpretation of the characters for the reader. Now the novelists are reacting against this human weakness in its reliance upon systems. The New Novelists and Robbe-Grillet are dehumanizing their characters to the extent that they remove their organizing tendency in order that there be a greater chance of creation on the part of the reader.

Robbe-Grillet, in Pour un nouveau roman says that he has no answer to life that he would care to furnish the reader. He knows that man asks the question about his place in the universe or if his life has any meaning. Description in the novel where everything is supplied to the reader is a type of "security blanket" for man in the anthropocentric society. In a novel where everything is furnished to him contemporary man sees a reflection of his own world where he is lord and master.

Robbe-Grillet sees a great obstacle to man's improvement of himself in the middle class society also under attack by the Marxist thinkers. He sees its basis and claim for authority without any justification at all. Along side of this deterioration of the foundations of the middle class are the developments in science that refute so many of the myths concerning man's place in the world.

The popularity of the phenomenological philosophers and the findings in science such as the "quantum theory" show that now the emphasis can be on other things. Related to the New Novel is the concentration of the phenomenological philosophies on the phenomena of perception. Each man

perceives something a bit differently in his perception of the work of art. Thus the character in Robbe-Grillet's novels can have as many variants as the creation of the reader can supply.

The element that the lack of diversity of character types and the skeletal treatment of the characterization both have in common is that they are both dehumanized elements. Their skeletal characterizations present concepts of humans, but not real humans, only shadows of humans. The same thing could be said about the lack of diversity of character. Connected to dehumanization is the fact that both of these procedures are a demonstration of reaction against the traditional.

This discussion of characterization in the dehumanization-humanization process could also overlap with another important element in this discussion. This element is point of view. A very brief vulgarization of point of view could be that it is the perspective from where the witnesses view the action of a novel or through whose eyes the action is related. The common characteristic of the traditional novel is that the author is omniscient even to the point of telling the reader how to interpret the novel. The innovation concerning point of view in the New Novel, especially in the novels of Robbe-Grillet, is that the point of view is an extremely limited one. Perhaps a better term than dehumanization for point of view in the New Novel would be dedeification. Lubbock, in The Craft of Fiction uses the word God to refer to the omniscient author. The deified author or sometimes author-narrator has been replaced in the New Novel. The omniscient author who acts as a god has been replaced by a limited point of view in that the action is seen

through the eyes of one or several different views.<sup>50</sup> In La Jalousie, for example, the point of view is limited to one person who is not stated nor who refers to himself throughout the "récit" at all. La Maison de rendez-vous is told in the first person, yet, in spite of this limited point of view, the narrator of this novel occupies a certain vantage point. He is not omniscient, but he is more informed than the narrator-protagonist of La Jalousie. This is reminiscent of Le Voyeur in which the author or narrator appears to be telling the story from a vantage point. The remainder of La Maison de rendez-vous is devoted to the author's attempt to imagine the actions of a certain Ralphe. In L'Immortelle the action is related in the third person because there is no narrator in the movie; when something is flashed on the screen to be observed by an audience, because of the quality of being on the screen, it is told in the third person. In L'Année dernière à Marienbad, the second person is used in dialogue by the character X attempting to convince the woman that she had been to Marienbad the year before. Dans le labyrinthe involves a point of view similar to that of La Maison de rendez-vous because as in this novel, a doctor is attempting to imagine the sensations of the soldier.

The important element in all of the above discussed elements of dehumanization is the idea that what is contained in the art medium, within the covers of the book, is not all of the work of art. The dehumanized work of art awaits the humanization of it through the participation of the reader.

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<sup>50</sup>See Percy Lubbock, The Craft of Fiction (New York, 1929).

This dehumanization-humanization process in aesthetics opens on a whole new perspective concerning man's place in the universe .

CHAPTER III  
DEHUMANIZATION OF CHARACTERS  
L'IMMORTELLE AND L'ANNEE DERNIERE A MARIENBAD

Dehumanization of characters has occurred throughout Robbe-Grillet's novels and *ciné-romans*. In every one of his novels sufficient examples of dehumanization could be found. It is the present author's opinion, however, that the two works that head the title of this chapter illustrate this type of dehumanization more effectively than Robbe-Grillet's other works. In both Pour un nouveau roman and La deshumanización del arte it is either stated or implied that one of the key factors in dehumanization is the faculty of sight.<sup>1</sup> The very essence of the *ciné-roman* is that it communicates through the transmission of images on a screen to the mind's eye through the faculty of sight.

The characters in these *ciné-romans* have the exterior human characteristics removed. First, there are no proper names in either the script of L'Immortelle or L'Année dernière à Marienbad, with the exception of Catherine Sarayan in L'Immortelle. In L'Année dernière à Marienbad there is X who is pursuing the woman A who is probably married to M. In L'Immortelle

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<sup>1</sup> See Jose Ortega y Gasset, La deshumanización del arte and Alain Robbe-Grillet, Pour un nouveau roman.

the characters consist of M, probably the husband, N, the lover, and a woman designated most of the time by the letter L. Her name appears in three different versions from the text of L'Immortelle. These names are Lâle, Laïle and Leila. This removal of the name and reduction of the character to a single letter reduces his or her individuality and identity. This process is not new to literature because it was used with notoriety by Kafka. This reduction destroys in the character his resemblance to a person by taking away from it that which makes it individual. This same process can be seen today in the concept that man is losing his individuality in being reduced to a code number for some machine.

Again on the exterior level, the characters are further dehumanized by the absence of any attempt at verisimilitude. This has been shown to be a characteristic of dehumanization in both Ortega y Gasset and Robbe-Grillet. In L'Immortelle the characters appear in stationary poses for the greatest part of the ciné-roman. The form of the novel imposes this upon the characters because the film is shown in a series of stationary poses which are numbered. This immobility takes away from the humanity of the character and its lack of an alive quality is yet another manifestation of the lack of verisimilitude which is again characteristic of dehumanization as seen by Ortega and Robbe-Grillet. L'Année dernière à Marienbad shows this same immobility in the use of the statues in the garden and the use of photographs. More than the immobility is the artificiality of dress and decor of the ciné-roman. The setting of this ciné-roman is a sumptuous baroque type of chateau. The characters are all dressed in very formal attire. The furnishings are very lavish, much in the

style of the movies of the thirties.

A very major factor in the dehumanization of character is the fact that the characters are not shown in the capacity of people, but as stylized characters. This is effected by the way in which the story is related. The novels and the ciné-romans are not related in a continuous linear smoothly flowing narrative. In Robbe-Grillet's novels and cine-romans the story is told in a series of images.<sup>2</sup> These images could be likened to the religious pageant which is a very primitive form of entertainment that is related to the enlarged portions of the mass in the development of the early theatre. The most obvious example of this procedure is the division of L'Immortelle into well over three-hundred of these "images". These separate immobile scenes with a pageant quality dehumanize the characters by stylization. Stylization is a characteristic of dehumanization especially according to Ortega who says that dehumanization is to stylize and to stylize is to deform reality.

Because of this pattern of relating the story in images, the immobile stylized images dehumanize the characters. They also effect a lack of characterization because of the ambiguity of this recounting of the story in images and the lack of emphasis on description. There is nothing that can be ascertained about a character's quality or type from any of the characters in either L'Immortelle or L'Année dernière à Marienbad. The only character analysis that could be proposed from L'Immortelle could be an obsession on N's

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<sup>2</sup>See Jean Bloch-Michel, Le Présent de l'indicatif (Paris, 1963).

part to search for L after her death.<sup>3</sup> Bruce Morrisette describes this obsession as jealousy.<sup>4</sup> From L'Année dernière à Marienbad the only remnant of characterization could be that X wants to convince A that he loved her the year before. Bernard Pingaud, in an article, has shown several possibilities for interpreting the character analyses or character relationships. "A peut avoir oublié X. X peut se tromper, tout comme A, sur L'identité d'un amant passé (grille Tailleur); X secrète le passé par son insistance même auprès de A (un peu comme le dit Robbe-Grillet dans sa préface); enfin, l'histoire est entièrement passé lorsque le filme débute, et elle se répète théâtralement."<sup>5</sup>

Another reason for the fact that Robbe-Grillet's characters are dehumanized is the fictional quality of all his works. For Robbe-Grillet and Ortega, to reiterate a previous point of concurrence, art has nothing to do with reality, and for this reason their fictional character dehumanizes them. Concerning L'Immortelle, Robbe-Grillet states that the city and the people met by N are true people. It is important to remember that for Robbe-Grillet's novels, the moment that a phenomenon is conceived in the mind's eye it is fiction. Thus, the characters in L'Année dernière à Marienbad are dehumanized because of their fictional character and there is an objective correlative of fictionalization in the fact that these characters, that is, X and A, are

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<sup>3</sup>Bruce Morrisette, Les romans de Robbe-Grillet (Paris, 1963), p. 224.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Bernard Pingaud, cited by Bruce Morrisette.



creating another fiction within the ciné-roman of what supposedly happened a year ago. The pictures that X possesses and the scenes pertaining to the statues show that there are really four fictionally dehumanized characters. There are X and A of L'Année dernière à Marienbad and then the X and A of X's creation within the work in the spectator's mind and that of Robbe-Grillet himself. Thus the character dehumanizes himself by creating a fictional narration in which he includes himself. This fictional aspect of the character is X's version of the love affair between himself and A that took place the year before. A invites this creation by telling him to relate to her all that they did. The following passage is important because it shows the invention of another story and the fusion of that fiction of the past with the present. The term present here means the present relative to the work of art. "Ensuite, vous m'avez demandé le nom des personnages. J'ai répondu que ça n'avait pas d'importance. Vous n'étiez pas de cet avis, et vous vous êtes mise à leur donner des noms, un peu au hasard je crois. . . Pyrrhus et Andromaque, Hélène et Agamemnon. . . Alors j'ai dit que c'était vous et moi, aussi bien. . . (Un silence.) ou n'importe qui.<sup>6</sup>

In the stage directions Robbe-Grillet provides for this fusion into the present. In viewing the ciné-roman, however, there would be no indications of this metamorphosis.

Thus the dehumanized characters have an objective correlative of them-

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<sup>6</sup>Alain Robbe-Grillet, L'Année dernière à Marienbad (Paris, 1961), p. 71.

selves, the fictional character projected on the movie screen, that is the character they imagine in remembering last year at Marienbad. The X and A of X's imagination are dehumanized because they are imagined or hallucinated or fictionalized according to the case. This information is never accessible to the reader or spectator of the ciné-roman. As in this previously cited passage, the redoublement of these characters appears in a situation of metamorphosis. The following stage directions show that Robbe-Grillet's intent was to create this impression. "Leur conversation continue, mais jouée directement, au lieu d'être rapportée au style indirect par la voix de X. L'attitude de A est presque la même que dans les scènes de l'hôtel: souriante, aimable, mais un peu ironique et mondaine. X, lui, est sensiblement différent: moins neutre, plus pressant, plus vivant, moins sévère."<sup>7</sup>

The equivalent of what has just been explained in L'Année dernière à Marienbad can be seen in L'Immortelle. After L's death N appears to see her everywhere and continues to search for her. An analysis by Lucien Goldman supports the possibility of there being a real and an illusory L. "Dans ce film, Laïle ou Leila (son nom n'est pas certain et il lui arrive plusieurs fois d'en changer) a une fonction très précise dans la structure globale constituée par ces trois éléments. Elle est l'imaginaire, réel et irréel à la fois, qui permet l'homme de se réaliser en tant qu'homme, de s'affirmer et--bien que la chose ne soit pas explicitement dite dans le film--de vouloir quelque chose,

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<sup>7</sup>L'Année dernière à Marienbad, p. 71.

L'Immortelle in which he supplies the information descriptive of the jealous husband. "Les idées tacites de prison, de femme sequestrée et battue, d'une L quasi-esclave d'un personnage puissant et jaloux (M, ou celui dont M serait l'agent) se communiquent au spectateur, portant au paroxysme le souvenir érotique d'une L lascive, extasiée, folle de désir et de crainte. Enfin, comme décidé, N se lève de son divan et quitte la maison."<sup>9</sup>

On another level the relationship between the characters involved is the stereotyped one in that the love situation is often reduced to the pursuer-pursued relationship. The male dominates the female physically and often emotionally as well. In L'Année dernière à Marienbad, X pursues A in an attempt to convince her of a previous liaison. In L'Immortelle, N pursues L in an effort to find out about her. After her death N is still obsessed with finding more information concerning her. Thus the pursuit still exists even after the death of L in the auto accident.

In the case of the two ciné-romans under question in this chapter, these stereotyped characters are also menaced by a third party who by his presence presents an opposition or obstacle to the affair. In L'Immortelle there is the character M who later N believes to be the captor and in total control of L. In L'Année dernière à Marienbad, X, a stranger, pursues A. The obstacle to A's freedom other than herself is a husband, M. Robbe-Grillet does not directly say that M is A's husband. The following lines represent his interpretation of the relationship between the three characters of the ciné-roman,

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<sup>9</sup>Morrisette, p. 225.

A, X, and M. "La jeune femme en tout cas commence par prendre la chose comme un jeu, un jeu comme un autre, dont il n'y a qu'à s'amuser. Mais l'homme ne rit pas. Obstiné, grave, sûr de cette histoire passée que peu à peu elle dévoile, il insiste, il apporte des preuves. . . Et la jeune femme, peu à peu, comme à regret, cède du terrain. Puis elle prend peur. Elle se raidit. Elle ne veut pas quitter ce monde faux mais rassurant qui est le sien, dont elle a l'habitude, et qui se trouve représenté pour elle par un autre homme, tendre et distant, désabusé, qui veille sur elle et qui est peut-être son mari."<sup>10</sup>

Thus, the relationship in both of these ciné-romans could be described as the stereotyped love triangle. A last element that adds to the stereotyped characters in these ciné-romans under question is the stereotyped form of the stories. Almost every one of the novels published by Robbe-Grillet appears in the form of the mass-media detective story.

Another way in which a character can be dehumanized is by being depicted as an animal. The thought behind this is that man can often be less than human. This was previously discussed in the introduction where dehumanization as a nineteenth century concept was treated. Balzac's works reflect this philosophy. This type of dehumanization can be seen in the fact that both the male and female characters have been depicted as fundamentally animalian.

Robbe-Grillet's female characters are often depicted as subhuman. They appear as inferior beings merely present for the pleasure of the male animal.

Alter cites the following passage from L'Immortelle:

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<sup>10</sup>L'Année dernière à Marienbad, pp. 13-14.

- L. D'ailleurs les femmes ne peuvent pas prier à cet endroit.  
 N. Pourquoi donc ?  
 L. Parce qu'elles sont impures. . . Vous ne savez pas ? Ce sont à la fois des êtres inférieurs et des démons. Elles ne sont bonnes que pour faire l'amour.<sup>11</sup>

Alter also mentions that the use of chains is to emphasize the erotic theme in Robbe-Grillet's works. In L'Immortelle we read: "ce n'est pas par hasard que L apparaît souvent parée de chaînes, ni seulement par fidélité à certaines images érotiques chères à l'auteur. Il s'agit de chaînes que lui impose un milieu où les femmes sont considérées comme à la fois des êtres inférieurs et des démons . . . ne bonnes que pour faire l'amour."<sup>12</sup> What is more indicative than just the use of chains is the fact that in both works, L'Immortelle and L'Année dernière à Marienbad the female appears scantily clothed and in a reclining position.

In L'Année dernière à Marienbad there are many scenes in which a bed is pictured, and most likely the spectator would conclude that the scenes are of her room. A is on that bed in a number of scenes. In one of the scenes in which A is on the bed in a reclining position, X fires a gun. "Il est au milieu de l'image, et l'on n'y voit personne d'autre. Il se retourne d'un bloc en levant un bras devant soi: il a un pistolet à la main et il tire aussitôt (même mouvement exactement que celui du stand de tir). Plan rapide, qui s'interrompt dès que le pistolet, brandi vers la caméra, a fait feu."<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Jean Alter, La Vision du monde d'Alain Robbe-Grillet, (Genève, 1964), p. 62.

<sup>12</sup> L'Immortelle, p. 62.

<sup>13</sup> L'Année dernière à Marienbad, p. 147.

In a quick change of scene A's body may be viewed; "Elle a les yeux grands ouverts et la bouche entr'ouverte, une espèce d'air extasié sur le visage. Sa robe, à moitié dé faite, est cette fois franchement provocante. Les cheveux sont étalés, en un désordre aussi, très séduisant. Elle est tombée en partie sur une peau de bête à fourrure épaisse (se trouvait-elle là auparavant?)."<sup>14</sup>

Another erotic scene illustrates this attitude towards women and can be seen in the rape scene later in the ciné-roman. Again, the female is depicted as a passive object that is violated: "A est basculée en arrière, X lui maintenant ses poignets (d'une seule main) sous la taille et un peu de côté, le buste ne pressant donc pas à plat sur le dos. A se débat, mais sans résultat aucun. Elle ouvre la bouche comme pour crier; mais X, penché sur elle, introduit aussitôt dans cette bouche, en guise de bâillon, une menue pièce de lingerie fine qu'il tenait dans l'autre main. Les gestes de X sont précis et plutôt lents, ceux de A desordonnes; elle tourne la tête une ou deux fois, de droite et de gauche, puis regarde de nouveau, yeux agrandis, X que se penche un peu plus sur elle. . ."<sup>15</sup> In L'Année dernière à Marienbad there are two other scenes.

In L'Immortelle there are a number of scenes in which the woman L appears in a reclined, seductive, submissive position. The first scene indicative of L's subjugated attitude is scene number ninety-three. We read:

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<sup>14</sup>L'Année dernière à Marienbad, p. 147.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., pp. 156-157.

the implications are that he is more animal than man and that he is therefore dehumanized. Thus, in the male character's reduction to mere desire for physical domination of the female, he is dehumanized in the capacity of being animalized. In L'Immortelle, N from this ciné-roman possesses L sexually, or that is at least what Robbe-Grillet intimates in the beginning of the novel. In scene number eighty-four L is depicted in very seductive terms. This indicates that a sexual encounter is soon to follow: "Elle dégage alors ses épaules du déshabillé de soie, qu'elle laisse peu à peu glisser sur la chair nue. Le haut d'un des bras est enserré à plusieurs tours par une chaîne de métal brillant. L a écarté en même temps les deux pans du déshabillé, sur le devant; mais le spectacle, de ce côté, est réservé à N, qui continue à l'observer sans bouger."<sup>18</sup>

In L'Année dernière à Marienbad the male characters betray nothing more of their characters except the animal side. This appears to be a contrast considering the sumptuous decor and costumes which lend a stilted atmosphere to the cine-roman. X is violent, as the scene with the gun being fired suggests. The previously cited rape scene also gives support of this.

In L'Immortelle, N is not suggested as being as violent as X from L'Année dernière à Marienbad. This ciné-roman is, however, a story of sex and jealousy which are primitive emotions not uncommon to the simplest domesticated pet. Although eroticism might be challenged as a characteristic of dehumanization, this erotic sadism hinted at in the conversation between

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<sup>18</sup>L'Immortelle, p. 84.

N and Catherine Sarayan must be categorized under the brutality that brings out the animalian qualities of Robbe-Grillet's characters.

Ça ne m'étonne pas. . . Comme cet homme dont je vous avais donné l'adresse l'autre fois. . . C'est probablement toute une bande. . . Vous savez qu'il se passe ici des choses particulières.

Quel genre de choses?

Des enlèvements, des prisons secrètes, des filles qu'on vend.<sup>19</sup>

Yet another aspect of dehumanization of character which must be treated is the concept of reification. This is a concept that views man as dehumanized as a result of capitalist society and practices. This phenomenon is defined in the following way by Goldman. It is first stated by Lukacs and then reiterated by Goldman.

C'est ce phénomène d'abolition, de réduction à l'implicite d'un secteur extrêmement importants des consciences individuelles auquel se substitue une propriété nouvelle, d'origine purement sociale, des objets inertes, dans la mesure où ils pénètrent sur le marché pour y être échangés et à partir de là, le transfert des fonctions actives des hommes aux objets, c'est cette illusion, fantasmagorique (que Marx a assimilée à la perspective du personnage shakespearien pour lequel savoir lire et écrire était une qualité naturelle et la beauté, le résultat d'un mérite, qu'on a désignée par le terme extrêmement suggestif de fétichisme de la marchandise, par la suite, de reification.<sup>20</sup>

Goldman's interpretation of Lukacs states a significant concept in the interrelationship between characters in Robbe-Grillet's novels. The important factor in the concept of reification is that it destroys the "élément qualitatif dans les relations entre les hommes, d'une part, et entre les hommes de la nature,

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<sup>19</sup>L'Immortelle, p. 108.

<sup>20</sup>Goldman, pp. 295-296.



d'autre part."<sup>21</sup>

The illustration of this disintegration of the qualitative relationship within the human interrelationship can be seen very easily in the two cinéromans under question. In L'Immortelle, the brutal physical contact minimizes the qualitative relationship between the characters. There is a sexual encounter, a killing in a horrible auto accident, and hints of M's domination of L. Yet on the person to person level these characters seem to have no link with each other. N enjoys a sexual relationship with L but doesn't know her name or where she lives. The conversations between N and Catherine do not clarify the events in L'Immortelle. They make the events more muddled and widen the distance between all the characters with respect to understanding. The physical violence in L'Année dernière à Marienbad is more manifest than in L'Immortelle. The relationship between the characters X and A can only be described as distant. X seems intent on convincing A of a past they shared but A refuses to accept what X says. The following lines represent Robbe-Grillet's treatment of the relationship between A and X.

Un inconnu erre de salle en salle--tour à tour, pleines d'une foule guindée, ou désertes--, franchit des portes, se heurte à des miroirs, longe d'interminables corridors. Son oreille enregistre des lambeaux de phrases, au hasard, ici et là. Son oeil passe d'un visage sans nom à un autre visage sans nom. Mais il revient sans cesse à celui d'une jeune femme, belle prisonnière peut-être encore vivante de cette cage d'or. Et voilà qu'il lui offre l'impossible dans ce labyrinthe où le temps est comme abolie: il lui offre un passé, un avenir et la liberté. Il lui dit qu'il se sont rencontrés déjà, lui et elle, . . .<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 296.

<sup>22</sup> L'Année dernière à Marienbad, p. 13.

The lack of communication between X and A is shown in A's refusal to accept the attempts of X to persuade her of the veracity of what he says. Most illustrative of this lack of connection or alienation of the characters in both of the ciné-romans is M, the husband, who watches over the action but never says anything nor appears to have any rapport with A and X. This can also be seen in the lack of dialogue or of any other communication between X and the other people of the hotel.

This lack of interrelationship between the characters in all of these ciné-romans can be interpreted as a type of manifestation of reification as explained by Goldman, and thus a manifestation of dehumanization. The basis for this assertion is to be found in the following citation:

Toutefois, comme l'a observé Lukacs dans une analyse plus avancée, l'homme ne saurait à la fois rester humain et accepter l'absence de contacts concrets et univoques avec les autres hommes, de sorte que la création humaniste qui correspondait réellement à la structure reificationnelle de la société libérale était l'histoire de l'individu problématique telle qu'elle s'est exprimé dans la littérature occidentale depuis don Quichotte jusqu'à Stendhal et Flaubert, en passant par Goethe (et, comme l'a montré Girard, avec certaines modifications jusqu'à Proust et en Russie, jusqu'à Dostoievsky).<sup>23</sup>

The words "ne saurait à la fois rester humain et accepter l'absence de contacts", imply a type of dehumanization. It is the popular meaning of dehumanization referring to man's loss of his own humanness by a modern mechanized society and its institutions.

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<sup>23</sup>Goldman, pp. 296-297.

CHAPTER IV  
DEHUMANIZATION IN THE DISAPPEARANCE  
OF THE AUTHOR OR THE NARRATOR  
LA JALOUSE , DANS LE LABYRINTHE AND LA MAISON DE  
RENDEZ-VOUS

In speaking of the arts other than painting, Ortega mentions that Debussy dehumanized music by cutting out the lyrical outbursts. In the area of literature he announces Mallarmé the liberator and dehumanizer of poetry by eliminating lyricism. This concept of itself of no lyricism or the negation of lyricism as known to the nineteenth century romantic implies the disappearance of the "moi" of the narrative referring to the author. "A fuerza de negaciones, el verso de Mallarmé anula toda resonancia vital y nos presenta figuras tan extraterrestres que el mero contemplarlas es ya sumo placer. Qué puede hacer entre estas fisonomías el pobre roastro del hombre que oficia de poeta? Solo una cosa: desaparecer, volatizarse y quedar convertido en una pura voz anónima que sostiene en el aire las palabras, verdaderas protagonistas de la empresa lírica. Esa pura voz anónima, mero substrato acústico del verso, es la voz del poeta, que sabe aislarse de su hombre circundante."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> José Ortega y Gasset, La deshumanización del arte (Madrid, 1925), p. 45.

Similarly, Robbe-Grillet has been said by Roland Barthes to have destroyed the "cœur romantique des choses".<sup>2</sup> Departing from this statement the absence of the author or the artist in Ortega's criticism has been implied by Barthes who was at this time referring to the use of the metaphor. Not all critics are in accord with respect to the disappearance of the author from Robbe-Grillet's works. Almost all of his critics would agree that the omniscient author has disappeared from his novels. Because, however, of the existence of the pronoun "je" in many of his novels, the critics vary with respect to its definition.

One of the traditional critics of Robbe-Grillet has said that the "je" is another form of the third person for fictional purposes only. "Ceci explique que lorsque l'écrivain dit "je", cela arrive souvent, ce pronom n'a plus rien à voir avec un symbole indiciel, c'est une manque subitement codée; ce je-là n'est rien d'autre qu'un "il" au second degré, un "il retourné (comme le prouverait l'analyse du je proustien)." <sup>3</sup>

Bruce Morrissette claims that La Jalousie is the climax of what he calls the "je-néant". He points out that the narrator never said "je" in reference to himself. "Or, rien n'est plus inexacte que de prétendre que ce narrateur jaloux 'ne se déclare jamais': tout le livre constitue un aveu. Qui plus est, cet homme parle, mais sans jamais se citer--n'est-ce pas ainsi que se présentent souvent nos propres paroles, lorsque nous nous remémorons quelque événement

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<sup>2</sup>See Roland Barthes, Essais Critiques (Paris, 1964).

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 16-17.

auquel nous avons participé?"<sup>4</sup> For Bruce Morrisette La Jalousie and the literary technique manifest in it marks a turning point in the contemporary novel and in the ensemble of Robbe-Grillet's works. "La Jalousie représente-t-il dans l'histoire du roman moderne une étape, un modèle, un échec ou un chef-d'oeuvre? Toute les conjectures sont permises. Le plus important est que ce livre mène quelque part soit son auteur lui-même, dans ses futurs romans, soit d'autres romanciers d'aujourd'hui et de demain. A quelles suites imprévues, à quelle lignée de métamorphoses romanesques les structures subtiles et enchevêtrées de La Jalousie donneront-elles le jour? Voilà ce qu'est un chef d'oeuvre: Tout à la fois une fin et un commencement."<sup>5</sup>

A very unusual and original approach to the question of the significance of the narrative "je" and the disappearance of the author is to be found in Jean Alter's La Vision du monde d'Alain Robbe-Grillet, For Alter, Robbe-Grillet is always present in his novels. For him the sculptor R. Jonestone was a way for Robbe-Grillet to enter his own fictional universe.<sup>6</sup> To Alter, the character Jonestone represents a Robbe-Grillet dependent on the finished work for his identity. This particular discussion is of La Maison de rendez-vous:

Il était naturel que Johnson assume le rôle du narrateur principal, celui dont le "je" se substitue au "je" du romancier de la première page.

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<sup>4</sup>Bruce Morrisette, Les romans de Robbe-Grillet (Paris, 1963), p. 132.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Jean Alter, La Vision du monde d'Alain Robbe-Grillet (Genève, 1966), p. 72.

Mais ce "je" lui-même, avant de pouvoir être accolé définitivement à Johnson, dévoile une troisième identité fictive de Robbe-Grillet . . . Avant que Johnson n'apparaisse, la fonction de ce personnage muet demeure assez énigmatique. On a d'abord l'intuition qu'il pourrait s'agir du romancier, vu de l'extérieur par un mouvement de réflexion sur soi-même, et saisie au moment où, tel le mari de la Jalousie ou le narrateur du Labyrinthe il enregistre passivement les paroles et les gestes qui feront objet d'un développement romanesque. Mais voilà que cet homme, à la faveur d'un dédoublement de scène répétée "avec exactitude dans ses moindres détails" (MR. p. 22), se transforme soudain en acteur du drame et prend à son compte le premier "je" fictif du texte, soit: le premier "je" place clairement sur le plan d'un récit imaginaire. Or ce "je", on l'a vu, s'affirme bientôt comme l'indicatif de la voix de Johnson dont on connaît l'identité.<sup>7</sup>

The preceding theory of the man in the black jacket being the narrator is a very interesting interpretation. There is very little way of refuting it since it is a hypothesis. It is the opinion of this author, however, that there is not enough evidence in the text to confirm this hypothesis. It is evident, from the text, that the narrative "je" stands for more than one narrator or one narrative situation. As for this being the first "je" placed on the level of an imaginary account, this author thinks not. The complete work is a fiction with its main quality that of its fictionality. This being true, then, the first "je" is just as imaginary in quality as the next one.

The preceding views as presented by Alter and Roland Barthes are the basic divergent views of the "je" in Robbe-Grillet's fiction, and the attitudes toward the presence or lack of presence of the author in his own novels. It will be shown that the "je-néant" of La Jalousie is the start of a development of the author's place in the novel as well as the narrator's. It is predicted that

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 73.

a progression of the concept of dehumanization with respect to the disappearance of the author's presence in the work of art with the disappearance of a narrator as a corollary will be evident. The order of this progression coincides with the publication of each of these works. La Jalousie, Robbe-Grillet's third published novel, appeared in 1957. Dans le labyrinthe was published next in 1959, and La Maison de rendez-vous followed in 1965. It is in this chronological order that this progression in the respective works will be discussed.

La Jalousie, as previously mentioned and cited, marks a point of divergence in Robbe-Grillet's novelistic technique. Bruce Morrisette affirms this because of the special element in point of view in which the narrator never refers to himself. The events of the novel are perceived through the distorted vision of a jealous man observing his wife in the company of an old friend who is very logically having an affair with her. "La composition de La Jalousie est donc commandée par la vision d'un homme, d'un jaloux qui progresse dans le temps, c'est-à-dire vit les épisodes, mais aussi les réexamine, les compare, les interroge et surtout les modifie, les change au gré de son imagination."<sup>8</sup>

We perceive because of the narrator, through his perception, the world through the eyes of a jealous man. Again, this narrator never refers to himself at all, nor does he ever affirm, "Je suis jaloux."

This specific technique of the "je-néant" narrator marks an effort on the

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<sup>8</sup>Morrisette, p. 114.

part of Robbe-Grillet to divorce the role of the author from the work, and resulting from this, to alter the concept of the narrator as the reader of the traditional novel knows it, and the narrator's function in the novel.

Contrary to the previously cited passage from Roland Barthes, who supports the concept that the "je" appearing in the contemporary novel such as the "je" of Proust is merely another version of the third person, the present author regards this technique as far more advanced than the third person singular narrative style. The third person immediately implies the lack of participation of the narrator in the events narrated. The third person narrative implies that there is a different level of fictionality in the narrator's words and the character in the narrative. The narrator in La Jalousie is participating fully in the events of the narration and therefore shows the same degree of fictionality as the wife A and Franck. The reason that Roland Barthes says the preceding about the "je" pronoun in contemporary literature is because this "je" pronoun is the direct opposite of lyrical in the nineteenth century romantic sense of the term. This is not to say that there could never be lyrical passages in Robbe-Grillet's novels or in any contemporary novels. The non-lyrical "je" in Robbe-Grillet's novels is nonlyrical because neither the author, Robbe-Grillet, nor the narrator expresses a personal emotion at all. It is true that the distorted scenes where the narrator appears to be hallucinating can be considered to indicate a strong emotion. This conveyance of a psychological aberration is, however, far removed from nineteenth century romantic lyricism.

This absence of the author directly implies that the author is placing himself at a distance from the work. The main reason for the apparent absence



of the author is the rejection of the omniscient author from Robbe-Grillet's novels. The author who refuses to address the reader concerning a prescribed interpretation of the given data within a novel must be called removed or absent from the novel.

The author refuses to take a hand in the interpretation or the final moral judgment that the reader might raise in reading the novel. In a sense Robbe-Grillet washes his hands of the major implications of the novel and leaves that question to the reader.

It appears that the exact inverse of the lyrical "je" or first person occurs in La Jalousie. Instead of the invisible "je" narrator expressing the sentiments of the author, the reader is the one to experience the phenomena presented. As it has been previously reiterated, Robbe-Grillet considers the reader the true creator of the novel because the novel's fictional quality allows only for this to be truly created in a reader's imagination.

To further this concept of the non-lyrical "je" of La Jalousie, the reader does not see the emotions of the narrator. The reader feels the experience of jealousy, and he knows that the probable husband of A is jealous, even though he never affirms it. The very important reason for this is because just as the author's presence is disappearing from the novel in this aspect of dehumanization so is that of the narrator. A more precise estimation of the situation would be that the classification author, character, and reader of the traditional novel is completely disintegrating in Robbe-Grillet's novels.

In La Jalousie, the lack of a narrator who refers to himself as "je" means several things in light of the previous information concerning the intervention

of the author in his novels, and the information concerning the breakdown of the traditional terminology of character function. The first element that can be asserted from the situation in the novel concerning the author's intervention and the narrator's peculiarities is that in Robbe-Grillet's novels there is a clear distinction between the author and the narrator, that Robbe-Grillet is avoiding any confusion of himself and the narrator or any character in the novel.

Another element in this author-character-narrator-reader breakdown or re-classification is the limited narrator. He, not being the owner of any great omniscience similar to that of the traditional narrator or author, is more of a character than a narrator. The husband of La Jalousie could more accurately be termed a character-narrator. The reader becomes more than just a reader because the form of the novel demands that the reader undergo the experience of the "jaloux". By reading the phenomena presented the reader also perceives in his mind's eye the same thing that the "jaloux" perceived and on the intellectual level experiences the perceptions of the jealous mind. Thus, the traditional terms author, narrator, and character all apply to the reader. Support of the above interpretation can be seen in Bruce Morrissette's criticism of La Jalousie: "Il est concevable que d'aucuns soient réellement empêchés, par leur conditionnement psychique de 'succomber' au fonctionnement d'un roman tel que La Jalousie: ceux qui, rompus à la lecture des romans analytiques, demandent toujours à l'auteur de leur expliquer en termes clairs de la psychologie du jour, ce que sont les personnages, refuseront peut-être de 'subir' l'expérience du

mari jaloux."<sup>9</sup>

The lack of a statement of "je" on the part of the narrator marks a certain express intention on Robbe-Grillet's part to break with the traditional or lyrical term "je". It might also be interpreted as an effort on Robbe-Grillet's part to communicate this to the reader or reading public. By not making a reference to "I", the author forces the reader to participate in the novel actively and not passively.

The non-lyrical "je" that has been presented in this chapter finds its correlative in the total lack of emotionally charged language throughout the novel. Geometric descriptions which have been discussed in the chapter dealing with Robbe-Grillet's works as a totality can be effectively used to create the non-lyrical narrative in a novel. In La Jalousie, in spite of the high emotional state described in the novel, there are no emotionally charged words at all. In the following description Franck, A's lover in the narrator's eyes, becomes an automaton under the gaze of the husband: "Il repose le verre sur la table, entre son assiette et le dessous-de-plat. Il se remet immédiatement à manger. Son appétit considérable est rendu plus spectaculaire encore par les mouvements nombreux et très accusés qu'il met en jeu: la main droite qui saisit à tour de rôle le couteau, la fourchette changeant de main. . . les allées et venues de la fourchette entre l'assiette et la bouche, les déformations rythmées de tous les muscles du visage pendant une mastication consciencieuse,

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<sup>9</sup>Morrisette, p. 132.

qui , avant même d'être terminé , s'accompagne déjà d'une reprise accélérée de l'ensemble."<sup>10</sup>

All of the preceding concerning the non-lyrical "je" should be qualified. The question in this discussion concerns the first person narrative as being non-lyrical. This does not mean that the lyrical is totally excluded from Robbe-Grillet's novels. The concept of lyrical in the traditional meaning of the word , that is musical , will be treated in the discussion of La Maison de rendez-vous. As in the question of the intervention of the author in the narrative , the concept of lyricism manifests itself in Robbe-Grillet's novels in a different form.

If it is remembered that the finished work is in the mind of the reader , and that the reader is the character-narrator-author , then it is to the wealth of emotional expression and sensitivity of the reader that the critic must look to find the lyrical quality in the work. The implications in the novel that point to an affair between A and Franck are all ambiguous. The best example of this deliberate ambiguity is the scene in La Jalousie where the same paragraph could be read on one level as an attempt at making a machine act , and it could be interpreted on another level as an allusion to a sexual experience: "Dans sa hâte d'arriver au but , Franck accélère encore l'allure . Les cahots deviennent plus violents . Il continue néanmoins d'accélérer . Il n'a pas vu , dans la nuit , le trou qui coupe la moitié de la piste . La voiture fait un saut ,

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<sup>10</sup>Alain Robbe-Grillet, La Jalousie (Paris, 1957), pp. 110-111.

La Maison de rendez-vous Alter was close to the method Robbe-Grillet follows in projecting himself into his works. For Alter, the man Johnson in the dark jacket was the novelist Robbe-Grillet in his own novel. Although this is a very creative analysis of the author's intrusion into his own work, this hypothesis has little basis for support within the text of the novel.

It has been established that Ortega included irony and humor as important characteristics of dehumanization. What can be seen in Robbe-Grillet's novels that does show an interference on the author's part into his novels is the irony and humor manifest in them. This exists in all of his novels, not just in the two novels under discussion in this chapter. It has already been established that this humor and irony does exist in his works and that this is another point of concurrence between the aesthetic theories of Ortega and Robbe-Grillet. An example of this humor can be seen in the fact that the jealousies from La Jalousie have been mentioned in L'Immortelle in which there is a scene depicting a man looking at something through jealousies. This is of course the vision many readers of La Jalousie receive of the novel. Jealousies are also also mentioned in La Maison de rendez-vous. This is very deliberate on the part of the author and indicative of his sense of humor.

Another manifestation of this ironic humor is a deliberate show of virtuosity. This can be seen in the insertion of another art medium within the novel. This is the African novel that Franck and A speak of in the novel. In La Maison de rendez-vous statues are described, and dramatic presentations are described within the novel. In Dans le labyrinthe there is the description of the painting of the "defeat of Reichenfels". Bruce Morrisette discusses this

concept in relation to La Jalousie. He sees a musical construction that dominates the whole of the work. For Morrisette, the novel divides into parts similar to a sonata. In the following quotation by him this interpretation can be seen and he himself raises the term virtuosity in his evaluation of this technique:

Il y a bien un mouvement linéaire dans la chronologie, depuis les soupçons qui naissent au début jusqu'à l'apaisement final, après l'apparent échec de l'aventure entre la femme et l'amant; mais elle est, sans cesse contrariée, semée de répétitions, coupée d'anticipations de reccourcis, de retours en arrière et semble s'arrêter dans la quatrième partie d'un roman qui en comprend neuf. Dès lors, aucun fait nouveau, hormis l'absence de la femme, n'interviendra dans le déroulement de l'intrigue. C'est pourtant seulement dans la septième partie du livre que la crise atteindra son paroxysme, après d'étonnantes et brillantes variations sur les matériaux déjà introduits. Les deux dernières parties constituent un diminuendo et une coda d'un virtuosité et d'une beauté exceptionnelles.<sup>12</sup>

A characteristic of La Jalousie that connects to dehumanization with respect to the disintegration of the narrator rather than that of the author is the simultaneity of several narrations. This technique is not highly developed in La Jalousie, but at least its beginnings can be seen in the novel. There is most obviously the narrative presented by the invisible narrator. This includes the basic descriptions of the milieu, of Franck, the wife A and the objects. This narrative is somewhat dry and colorless. It could be compared to a map of directions for assembling a piece of machinery: "Mais le regard qui, venant du fond de la chambre, passe par-dessus la balustrade, ne touche terre que beaucoup plus loin, sur le flanc opposé de la petite vallée, parmi les bannaniers

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<sup>12</sup>Morrisette, pp. 114-115.

de la plantation. On n'aperçoit pas le sol entre leurs panaches touffus de larges feuilles vertes."<sup>13</sup>

A different narrative comes from this same source, the invisible narrator whose hallucinations constitute a world of large insects and Franck as alien to him who appears to be a type of super-virile man. This is the objective part of the novel in this narration. Often a starting point to this narration is the sight or remembrance of the centipede which Franck killed at one point in the novel. This hallucinative narrative occurs at no particular point in the novel, and appears to have no spatial delineation whatsoever. In fact, this hallucinative narration is existent because of a type of movement and metamorphosis in connecting images that can be seen in the baroque poets. This transitional technique to the hallucinative narrative can be seen in the following citation: "L'envers du miroir est une plaque de bois plus grossier, rougeatre également, mais terni, de forme ovale, qui porte une inscription à la craie effacé aux trois quarts. A droite, le visage de A. . . , qu'elle penche maintenant vers sa gauche pour brosser l'autre moitié de la chevelure, laisse dépasser un oeil qui regarde devant soi, comme il est naturel, vers la fenêtre béante et la masse verte des bananiers."<sup>14</sup>

In the preceding example, the mirror is used to introduce A into the narrative. The following example of this technique is a very good example of this movement and metamorphosis of going from the first narrative described to

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<sup>13</sup>La Jalousie, p. 11.

<sup>14</sup>La Jalousie, p. 68.

that of the hallucinative narrative. The manner in which the description of A brushing her hair changes to the description of the centipede that the narrator is obsessed with is that is to be noticed here: "Le bruit est celui du peigne dans la longue chevelure. Les dents d'écaille passent et repassent du haut en bas de l'épaisse masse noire aux reflets roux, électrisant les pointes et s'électrisant elles-mêmes, faisant crépiter les cheveux souples, fraîchement lavés, durant toute la descente de la main fine--la main fine aux doigts effilés, qui se referment progressivement."<sup>15</sup>

At this point the last sentence, especially the image of A's hands clenching and unclenching has been seen previously in the novel. This is the point where the centipede enters the description. It is important to notice that these transitions still occur at the beginnings of each paragraph: "Les deux longues antennes accélèrent leur balancement alterné. L'animal s'est arrêté au beau milieu de mur, juste à la hauteur du regard. Le grand développement des pattes, à la partie postérieure du corps, fait reconnaître sans risque d'erreur la scutigère, ou 'mille-pattes-araignée'. Dans le silence, par instant, se laisse entendre, le grésillement caractéristique, émis probablement à l'aide des appendices bucaux."<sup>16</sup>

Another narrative level which is perhaps the minor one of the novel is the narrative that Franck relates. This narrative includes an excursion to town with A, the jealous husband's wife, and the car breakdown which befalls them,

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<sup>15</sup>La Jalousie, p. 165.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.



and their success in repairing their vehicle. Another narrative by the narrator Franck is the recounting of the novel that he and A are reading. In this novel there is a love triangle and an affair similar to that alluded to in the novel La Jalousie. This phenomenon makes Franck a narrator-character rather than just a character.

Thus, in this novel there is a new development. There is not only a plurality of narratives, but also a plurality of narrators. This splitting of the narrator does not make it appear as though the narrator did not exist in this novel. This technique will be developed to that point in two novels that will be treated later in this chapter. The very unified nature of the novel and the fact that the three separate narratives in the novel relate on every level creates an illusion of a unified point of view, if not in fact a real unified view.

The hallucinative narration can be interpreted as appropriate in an expression of jealousy, and the narrative with Franck as the narrator that relates the events of an African novel can be seen also in the field of the unifying theme of jealousy. It can also be considered an objective correlative of the plot or interaction between A, Franck and the husband. It is for this reason that the four separate narratives appear one. In the later novels, this technique will be seen again. La Jalousie marks the beginning of this technique in Robbe-Grillet's novels.

One factor that contributed to this concept of dehumanization because of the disappearance of the author from the work, and its corollary that the narrator disappears as well, is the concept of time. In this novel, time is almost non-existent. The only adverb of time to be found in the novel is the

characteristics have a special meaning because they reinforce the concept that the author is removed from his work.

Jean Alter, in his La Vision du monde d'Alain Robbe-Grillet, proposes a dissimilar interpretation to the preceding in an analysis of La Jalousie. Jean Alter sees Robbe-Grillet's presence in all of his works. His presence in La Maison de rendez-vous has been previously presented. In La Jalousie, Alter sees that the following quotation is an example of a description of the author which breaks through the consciousness of the narrator. "La description de l'auteur, qui perce ici sous la conscience du personnage, donne une impression très détaillée et suggestive de l'apparence incohérente de la structure du chant, mais laisse dans l'équivoque la question essentielle: ces variations, ces retours, ces interruptions et recommencements inattendus, proviennent-ils de la libre inspiration du chanteur, comme pourrait le croire un auditeur pur initié aux lois de ce genre musical, et donc expriment-ils une liberté qui se manifeste par le désordre ou au contraire, obéissent-ils à une ordonnance idéale qui règle strictement l'apparente invention de l'exécutant?"<sup>17</sup>

Alter is referring to the chauffeur's song in the middle of the novel.

A cause du caractère particulier de ce genre de mélodie, il est difficile de déterminer si le chant s'est interrompu pour une raison fortuite. . . ou bien si l'air trouvait là sa fin naturelle.

De même, lorsqu'il recommence, c'est aussi abrupt, sur des notes qui ne paraissent guère constituer un début, ni une reprise.

A d'autres endroits, en revanche, quelque chose semble en train de se terminer; tout l'indique: une retombée progressive, le calme retrouve, le sentiment que plus rien ne reste à dire: mais après

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<sup>17</sup>Alter, p. 32.

la note qui devait être la dernière en vient une suivante, sans la moindre solution de continuité, avec la même aisance, puis une autre, et d'autres à la suite, et l'auditeur se croit transporté en plein cœur du poème. . . quand, là, tout s'arrête, sans avoir prévenu.<sup>18</sup>

There is not enough textual evidence in La Jalousie to prove Alter right or wrong. His is merely an interesting hypothesis. In this passage, the author is not piercing the conscience of the narrator at all. Instead, this is one of the methods that the author uses to remove himself traditionally from his work. This allusion to a musical form is an objective correlative of the structure of the whole novel whose structure contains musical parallels as Bruce Morrisette has stated. The detailed structure of what is called the "poème" is an objective correlative of the technique in La Jalousie.

Alter is not wrong. He has submitted a perfectly allowable interpretation, There is room for the question, however, if Alter in submitting this interpretation is keeping in mind the totality of Robbe-Grillet's works or if he is faithful to them.

Next in chronological order of publication in this group of novels to be treated is Dans le labyrinthe, which appeared in 1959. It manifests very obvious divergences from La Jalousie. First, it does not center itself around an intense human emotion such as jealousy. In fact, the novel appears almost totally void of any emotion at all. Emotion appears to be exactly the opposite of what this novel is concerned with. The action centers itself around a soldier

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<sup>18</sup>Robbe-Grillet as quoted by Alter.

from an unknown army wandering in a nameless town searching for the father of a friend dead in battle. The end occurs with the death of the soldier. Robbe-Grillet seems to want to emphasize the difference between La Jalousie and Dans le labyrinthe in a note to the reader at the beginning of the novel. "Ce récit est une fiction, non un témoignage. Il décrit une réalité qui n'est pas forcément celle dont le lecteur a fait lui-même l'expérience: ainsi les fantassins de l'armée française: ne portent-ils pas leur numéro matricule sur le col de la capote. De même l'histoire récente d'Europe occidentale n'a-t-elle pas enregistré de bataille importante à Reichenfels ou dans les environs. Il s'agit pourtant ici d'une réalité strictement matérielle, c'est-à-dire qu'elle ne prétend à aucune valeur allégorique."<sup>19</sup>

In consideration of the first part of this chapter and the discussion of the absence of the first person pronoun a significant difference appears in Dans le labyrinthe. In this novel the first person pronoun does appear. In spite of this, however, the novel does continue a certain development in the concept of dehumanization as a disappearance of the author in the novel. The use of the first person starts a more sophisticated development of the concept of dehumanization in the disappearance of the author and the narrator. In La Jalousie, the absence of the pronoun "je" emphasized its non-lyrical quality. This was perhaps a necessity in view of the very intense emotional state treated throughout the novel.

In Dans le labyrinthe there is no emotional state to be projected and

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<sup>19</sup>See Alain Robbe-Grillet, Dans le labyrinthe.

thus the pronoun "je" could be used and stand for the non-lyrical first person. This can be further illustrated in several ways. The story concerns a soldier, but it is not the soldier who relates the story even though the first person is used. The story is narrated by a character in the novel who attempts to relive the situation of the soldier. A good guess at who this narrator is would be the doctor who attends the soldier at the hour of his death. This can be deduced from the switch in decor from inside to outside. The character-narrator is inside and is trying to imagine what the soldier has experienced. This switch can be very easily seen within the text of the novel because the change is always prefaced by the same expression and no other, "dehors il neige". The main basis for this view is the very last sentence of the novel in which the narrator says, ". . . le vestibule obscur où la canne-parapluie est appuyée obliquement contre le porte-manteau, puis, la porte d'entrée une fois franchie, la succession des longs corridors, l'escalier en spirale, la porte de l'immeuble avec sa marche de pierre, et toute la ville derrière moi."<sup>20</sup>

To James Lethcoe, in his article concerning Dans le labyrinthe, the doctor who treats the soldier is the narrator who is trying to put himself in the place of the soldier. This marks the difference or progression of Dans le labyrinthe with respect to La Jalousie. This technique marks the disappearance of the author in that there is a further alienation of the author from the events of the novel because a character in the novel acts as the creator of the fiction. The narrator is split from the author as in La Jalousie. As in La Jalousie, this

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<sup>20</sup>Dans le labyrinthe, pp. 220-221.

splitting of the author from the narrator eliminates the possibility of the narrator being an agent of the author. Thus, this results in an alienation of the author.

Contrary to La Jalousie, there is only one narrator, but there is a plurality of narratives related by this one narrator. One reason for the split for the narrator in Dans le labyrinthe is the fact that the same character in the novel has two functions. First, he is a character who puts himself in the place of another character. Thus, in a way he is a type of author. Then, as this new character, he attempts a narration by recreating the sensations of the soldier. He is also a minor character, the doctor, appearing sparingly in the récit, who cares for the soldier.

The narrator's fiction is only one narration. There is a different degree of fictionality in the one sentence narration. It begins at the beginning of the novel, "Je suis seul ici, maintenant, bien à l'abri"<sup>21</sup> and in the last phrases of the novel, "et toute la ville derrière moi."<sup>22</sup> Included in this narration is any part of the narration that describes the inside of the building, that is, the room from which he is creating the narration. The other narration is the creation concerning the soldier on the outside of the room and that the narrator is in. This narration, as it has been previously mentioned, always begins with the words "dehors il neige." These transitions just as in La Jalousie are made at the beginning of the paragraphs. The first person is used sparingly in this

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<sup>21</sup> Dans le labyrinthe, p. 9.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 221.

novel, limiting itself for all practical purposes to the very beginning and end of the novel. The following lines show the quick transition from the first person to the same type of narrative found in La Jalousie. "Je suis seul ici, maintenant, bien à l'abri. Dehors il pleut, dehors on marche sous la pluie en courbant la tête, s'abritant les yeux d'une main tout en regardant quand même devant soi, quelques mètres d'asphalte mouillé; dehors il fait froid, le vent souffle entre les branches noires dénudées; le vent souffle dans les feuilles, entraînant les rameaux entiers dans un balancement, dans un balancement, balancement qui projette son ombre sur le crépi blanc des murs."<sup>23</sup>

There is no particular order in which the narrations appear, except that the outside narration is prefaced by "dehors". The descriptions of the inside belong to the narrative beginning with the first sentence of the novel and ending with the last. These are descriptions of the room, and it is by the doctor or minor character and not the narrator-soldier that this narrative is created. "Sur le bois verni de la table, la poussière a marqué l'emplacement occupé pendant quelque temps--pendant quelques heures, quelques jours, minutes, semaines--par de menus objets, déplacés depuis, dont la base s'inscrit avec netteté. . ."24

Thus, there is only one character, but the fact that there are three separate narrations and the fact that there are several degrees of fictionality in these narrations represent a split in the narrator. A correlative of this split

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<sup>23</sup>Dans le labyrinthe, p. 9.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 10.

of the narrator is the fact that there is also a split in the character of the soldier into several soldiers. The physical space occupied in the narrative has an effect on the split of the soldier. First, there is or was a soldier that the character, the doctor, perceived. Then, there is a fictional soldier that is created in the mind of the doctor. This character is the one always introduced by "dehors". "Dehors il neige. Les petits flocons serrés ont recommencé à tomber sur la chaussée déjà blanche. Le vent, qui s'est levé, les chasse horizontalement et l'on doit marcher en courbant la tête, en courbant la tête un peu plus, en appliquant davantage sur le front la main qui protège les yeux, laissant tout juste apercevoir quelques centimètres carrés de neige crissante, peu épaisse, durcie déjà par les piétinements. Arrivé à un croisement, le soldat hésite, cherche du regard les plaques qui devraient indiquer le nom de cette voie transversale."<sup>25</sup>

The other part of the chapter is diffused as if through a prism in the first description of the room where the narrator is situated. A picture is described that comprises a bar scene in which several soldiers appear. It is not by coincidence that the soldier resembles the soldier described by the narrator of another of Robbe-Grillet's novels, Dans le labyrinthe. "A l'écart, comme séparés de la foule qui les entoure par une zone inoccupée--étroite certes, mais suffisante néanmoins pour que leur isolement soit sensible, suffisante en tout cas pour les signaler au regard bien qu'ils se situent à l'arrière-plan--trois soldats, assis à une table plus petite, l'avantdernière vers le fond sur le côté

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<sup>25</sup>Dans le labyrinthe, p. 31.



droit, tranchent par leur immobilité et leur raideur avec les civils qui emplissent la salle."<sup>26</sup>

This soldier who dies is a split character because he divides and sub-divides within the novel. He first divides into the real soldier (relatively speaking) and the fictional or imaginary one in the mind of the narrator. Then he divides into three soldiers in the painting of the "Defeat at Reichenfels". The thing that separates these soldiers from the soldier who does and his fictional projection is space and the art medium.

A simple interpretation of the preceding analysis is that this is just the objective correlative of the soldier within the novel. This, of course, is true, but this objective correlative has special significance with respect to the disappearance of the author and the narrator from the work of art. This confusion and deliberate change of scene from the soldier of the fiction and the soldier of the painting takes the attention away from the fact that there is no author at all, much less a narrator. The following description of a soldier in the painting applies precisely to the soldier of the narrator's story. "Aucune pensée n s'y devine. C'est seulement un visage fatigüe, plutôt maigre, encore amaigri par une barbe qui n'a pas été rasée depuis plusieurs jours."<sup>27</sup>

Another element that is connected to the disappearance of the narrator is that the author also seems to be non-existent in Dans le labyrinthe. The part of the novel that is narrated in the first person "je" and ending with "je"

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<sup>26</sup>Dans le labyrinthe, p. 26.

<sup>27</sup>Dans le labyrinthe, pp. 28-29.

would at first appear to be different from La Jalousie. The "je-néant" of La Jalousie and the stated "je" or first person pronoun are similar in that they both are not representative of the author since the narrator and the author are separate in Robbe-Grillet's novels. The other element of similarity between the "je-néant" of La Jalousie and Dans le labyrinthe is that both are manifestations of the non-lyrical first person. The "je" or the first person pronoun is not lyrical in La Jalousie as it has been previously shown. The first person in Dans le labyrinthe is not lyrical because the character saying "je" is trying to put himself in the place of another character. The first person in this novel belongs to a character not feeling his own feelings, but those of another; it is the first person by a proxy.

The important reason for the first person in Dans le labyrinthe being non-lyrical is that this novel is a fiction and makes no attempt to imitate reality. "Ce récit est une fiction, non un témoignage. Il décrit une réalité qui n'est pas forcément celle dont la lecteur a fait lui-même l'expérience."<sup>28</sup>

The traditional novel from the times that it was confused with the historical genres through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has made an effort to create the illusion of reality. This explains the reason for the author's presence in the novel because if the limits of reality are accepted, then there is only one interpretation available. By emphasizing the fact that Dans le labyrinthe is a fiction, the need for an agent that is a narrator ceases to exist.

As in the discussion of La Jalousie, the fact that the characters and the

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<sup>28</sup>Dans le labyrinthe.

narrator's roles overlap furthers the disappearance of the narrator. In Dans le labyrinthe the narrator saying "je" disappears in a sense because he also becomes a spectator of a work of art. In Dans le labyrinthe he is a spectator of a painting just as the character Franck of La Jalousie is also a character-reader-narrator of the African novel that he relates to the husband.

The narrator also disappears in Dans le labyrinthe because of his position in the novel. Often in the traditional novel, the narrator occupies one position apart from the action of the novel. The most common example of this is the third-person narrative which exists from the chansons de geste up to the twentieth century. This in itself excludes the narrator from the novel as a participant and therefore the reader focuses his attention on the characters and situations depicted in the narration. This implies an assigned place for the narrator. The first person narratives of the early romantic period are really not an innovation because the romantic hero by definition is ostracized from and by society. The following assertion by Bruce Morrisette, that the narrator leaves his assigned position as outsider to enter the scene and to become a part of the work serves as further support of the disappearance of the narrator from the work by spatial change. "Variantes de la même scène, nouvelles dispartition du gamin dans la perspective des réverbères. La réussite enfin: les deux personnages entrent dans le café, passent devant un autre 'personnage' (le narrateur?) viennent occuper la place qu'ils ont dans le dessin."<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>Bruce Morrisette, Les Romans d'Alain Robbe-Grillet (Paris, 1963), p. 153.

The disappearance of the narrator also rests on the true uncertainty of who really is the narrator. The consensus of most critics is that the narrator is the doctor. The following from Bruce Morrissette is a representative statement.

Quelques scènes plus récentes s'intercalent: le soldat pénètre de nouveau dans la chambre de la jeune femme. Il est blessé; un médecin (le narrateur) se penche sur lui. Sur un de ces "non" qui marque toujours l'abandon d'une fausse piste dans le labyrinthe du récit, le texte revient en arrière, à la scène déjà ancienne où son camarade blessé tente de lui confier la boîte, à lui qui, après un cauchemar de rues, de reverberes, de facades monotones, de casernes et de couloirs a la recherche d'un destinaire hypothétique, est maintenant lui-même étendu, blessé, sur le lit de la jeune femme.<sup>30</sup>

This disappearance of the narrator does not negate his presence. This is something that Bruce Morrissette tries to make clear in the following passage. The question that this raises is, is this necessary? A narrator must be present within the confines of the novel for a narration to be produced. "Mais il n'en est rien, et le narrateur, quoique invisible est toujours present. Tous les 'cadrages' du soldat, qu'il soit adossé à un réverbère, assis au café ou perdu dans les couloirs des immeubles. . ."<sup>31</sup>

He further says that this narrator's presence is felt by the fact that he determines the content of each scene and the transition from the scenes to the scenes within the scenes. "On peut penser--surtout à cause des 'feuilles éparses' qu'on trouve sur la table à la fin du livre--qu'il rédige un journal, qu'il recrée ou crée tout simplement une histoire dont il cherche la vérité par

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<sup>30</sup>Morrissette, p. 157.

<sup>31</sup>Dans le labyrinthe, pp. 158-159.

une série d'hypothèses, de tentations de reconstruction fictive mais vraisemblable. Ainsi s'expliqueraient les 'non' qui effacent comme un coup de chiffon l'ébauche des scènes qualifiées de 'fausses' par le narrateur lui-même."<sup>32</sup>

Dehumanization with respect to the disappearance of the narrator does not imply that a narrator does not exist. This is impossible. Mr. Morrisette's argument that the narrator's presence is manifest throughout the novel is obviously true. The point of the disappearance of the narrator is that the narrator as an agent of the author or just functioning as a narrator is disappearing from the consciousness of the reader. Because the narrator is a character included in the action and occupying a minor part of the action described, it is easy for the reader to lose awareness of his presence. The diffusion of the narrator separates the agents of separate narratives on separate levels. The fact that the single narrator occupies different areas in space presents an unified narrator whose presence is felt throughout the novel just as Bruce Morrisette says. The important element is this.

It is true that the question of lack of emotion was briefly alluded to in this discussion of Dans le labyrinthe. This was also discussed with respect to La Jalousie. This has been interpreted as a correlative to the non-lyrical first person in La Jalousie. It is true that jealousy is the most violent of emotions, but not a word of this strong emotion is uttered throughout the novel. The lack of strong emotions is the subject of Dans le labyrinthe. This does not mean that

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<sup>32</sup>Morrisette, p. 159.

the novel. In Dans le labyrinthe there is only one narrator. The one character in Dans le labyrinthe handles two functions. Also, in Dans le labyrinthe, the narratives are less unified in theme and the narrator is a very significant character within the novel. Thus, Dans le labyrinthe furthers the disintegration of the narrator in the process of dehumanization of the work through the disappearance of the author and the narrator from the work.

La Maison de rendez-vous starts with a narration in the first person just as Dans le labyrinthe started. After a very short period of time another narrator and narration occurs in the text. This is different from both La Jalousie and Dans le labyrinthe in which the same narrator relates different narrations dependent upon spatial changes. The scenes in La Jalousie are totally dependent upon the field of vision of the husband relating the action of the novel. Dans le labyrinthe has one narrator relating two narratives separated by a spatial categorical principle.

Thus, La Maison de rendez-vous presents a further development by presenting a multiplicity of narrators with narrations of equal importance or at least narrations that approached equal importance in the text. It has already been established that some characters occupy the role of narrator such as Franck in La Jalousie, but these narrations were only microcosms of the larger narrations of the principle narrator.

In La Maison de rendez-vous the second narrative is introduced in an inconspicuous transition just like that of Dans le labyrinthe. "Assise sur le bord d'un canape, sa chevelure à demi renversée découvrant davantage la peau fragile au duvet blond. Mais deux personnages s'avancement et masquent

bientôt la scène, une haute silhouette en smoking sombre, à qui un gros homme au teint rouge parle de ses voyages. . . Tout le monde connaît Hong-Kong, sa rade, ses jonques, ses sampans, les buildings de Kowloon, et l'étroite robe à jupe entravée, fendue sur le côté jusqu'à la cuisse, dont sont vêtues les eurasiennes. . .<sup>33</sup>

It should be noted that these three novels will show a progression in technique concerning the question under discussion. It is true that transition in Robbe-Grillet's novels is different from that of the traditional novels where the reader is alerted well in advance of the transition of the shift in scene. It is true that he continues this technique of plurality of narratives in La Maison de rendez-vous. He remains faithful, however, to his method of transition demonstrated in both La Jalousie and Dans le labyrinthe. Robbe-Grillet always signals the start of another narration in some way. In Dans le labyrinthe he uses the expression "dehors il neige". In La Maison de rendez-vous the description of the character is a signal that a new narration is to begin. The fat red-faced man who talks to the man in the dark jacket is usually the signal that the other narration is to begin. As it has been mentioned before, this fat red-faced man talks to a man in a dark jacket, and for Jean Alter, this character represents Robbe-Grillet. This interpretation should be viewed in terms of what has been said about the vanishing line of demarcation in the assigned functions of the character, narrator and reader. In the previous dis-

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<sup>33</sup>Alain Robbe-Grillet, La Mainon de rendez-vous (Paris, 1965), p. 13.

cussion of La Jalousie it was proposed that the narrator was in reality a character-narrator and the reader was a reader-author. This is also true of La Maison de rendez-vous. The reader here is a reader-author who creates the work in his reading of it. The fat man relating the information concerning Hong-Kong to the man in the dark jacket is a narrator. He is also a character seen by the character who calls himself "je" at Lady Ava's house. The situation of the man in the dark jacket is analogous to that of the reader. The reader also becomes a spectator because of the fact that often in the course of the novel the reader is in the audience of a dramatic presentation that is put on at the Villa Bleue, Lady Ava's house. The transition of this dramatic narrative occurs as the other transitions occur, at the beginning of the paragraph. "En me retournant, j'ai aperçu d'un seul coup la scène: deux personnages immobilisés dans des attitudes dramatiques, comme sous le choc d'une intense emotion. Ils étaient cachés tout à l'heure par un buisson assez bas, et c'est en m'avancant jusqu'au massif de ravenalas, puis en gravissant la pente de terre nue, que j'ai atteint cette position d'où il est aisé de les apercevoir, dans un halo de lumière bleue qui provient de la maison, plus proche tout à coup que le chemin parcouru ne le lascia prévoir, et dans une perspective brusquement dégagée, juste à cet endroit."<sup>34</sup>

In this novel there is a plurality of narratives which accounts for the disappearance of the narrator, similar to what was seen in La Jalousie and Dans le labyrinthe. In this, the latest of Robbe-Grillet's novels treated in this

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<sup>34</sup>La Maison de rendez-vous, pp. 25-26.



chapter, the plurality of narratives reaches its highest development.

The essential narrative of the novel concerns the character who starts the novel. This character is a guest at one of the parties given by Lady Ave. He attempts to place himself in the position of another character, Ralphe Johnson. The narrative that starts out at the Villa Bleue narrated by the original narrator subdivides into three separate narratives. First, there is the narrative on the part of this same character who refers to himself as "je" of the events surrounding the death of the character Edouard Manneret and what are most likely the illegal actions of Ralphe Johnson. Stemming from the first narration referred to is the narration about the city of Hong-Kong by the fat character with the red complexion. Also stemming from the narration of the events of the Villa Bleue is the narrative on the part of the same narrator concerning the dramatic scenes presented on stage at the Villa Bleue. Branching out from the major narrative concerning the events surrounding the death of Edouard Manneret is the narrative of the plot between Edouard and Lada Ava to deceive Ralphe. Within the narrative of the man who had been to Hong-Kong are also narratives concerning works of art, in this case statues. An example of this can be seen in the following passage. "L'homme qui est allé à Hong-Kong continue à parler des horribles sculptures ornant le jardin du Tiger Balm: apres le groupe intitulé 'L'Appât', il se met à décrire 'L'Enlèvement d'Azy', monolithe de trois ou quatre mètres de hauteur qui represente un orang-outan gigantesque portant son épaule, où il la retient

de Macao. . . Il y a un Ralph Johnson qui habite les Nouveaux Territoires, mais il est américain. . . Il a planté du chanvre indien et du pavot blanc. . . des petites surfaces. . . Vous n'en avez jamais entendu parler?-- No, jamais, dit l'Américain."<sup>36</sup> Later in the novel Ralph confesses to Edouard Manneret that he is the American.

To further develop this ambiguity and contradiction in the novel, the following description of a meeting with Edouard Manneret and Ralph raises the question if there are two Ralph Johnson's in the course of the novel. "Il dort tranquillement dans son lit, mais Johnson insiste pour qu'on le réveille, il attend au salon, il bouscule les servantes apeurées et pénètre de force dans sa chambre; tout ça, c'est la même chose. Manneret prend d'abord Johnson pour son fils, il le prend pour Georges Marchant, ou Marchat, il le prend pour le roi Boris."<sup>37</sup>

The concept of the work of art as a game shows a further intricateness in La Maison de rendez-vous. This is reinforced by the further complexity of the narrative which has been previously presented. The multiplicity of narratives can also imply a vision of irony on the part of the author. It implies that the author toys with the reader. If the concept of game were in its purest form, which is patterns and structures, then this concept could apply to all of his novels.

To conclude this study concerning dehumanization with respect to the

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<sup>36</sup>La Maison de rendez-vous, pp. 95-96.

<sup>37</sup>La Maison de rendez-vous, pp. 95-96.

disappearance of the author or the narrator several assertions may be made . First, La Jalousie with the deliberate omission of the first person pronoun marks a deliberate attempt on the part of the author to minimize the role of the narrator and author in the novel . In the two subsequent novels, Dans le labyrinthe and La Maison de rendez-vous, this particular technique is absent, but the concept of dehumanization is achieved by a more highly developed technique . The diffusion of the narrative which is only slightly seen in La Jalousie due to the unifying action of the theme of the novel becomes more evident in Dans le labyrinthe and La Maison de rendez-vous. These novels enforce the disappearance of the narrator by destroying the organizational unity implying one controlling consciousness . In the last novel, La Maison de rendez-vous, the highest degree of intricateness is achieved with regard to the polyphony of the plot . It represents a higher degree of diffusion of the narrative and thus a further breakdown of the narrator as traditionally conceived .

Thus, in the course of this chapter, the speculation by Bruce Morrisette that La Jalousie marks the beginning of a new narrative trend in the works of Robbe-Grillet has been shown to be correct by the study of Dans le labyrinthe and La Maison de rendez-vous. The development demonstrated in this chapter, therefore, shows the growth of the theme of dehumanization in the novels of Robbe-Grillet.

## CHAPTER V

### THE CLIMAX OF DEHUMANIZATION IN ROBBE-GRILLET'S NOVELS

#### PROJET POUR UNE REVOLUTION A NEW YORK

With the publication of Projet pour une révolution à New York in 1970 appears the most highly developed manifestations of Robbe-Grillet's dehumanization as exposed and discussed in the preceding chapters. The elements of dehumanization that will be discussed in this chapter are the concept of artistic irony and humor, virtuosity, stylization, elimination of the author and narrator, and character dehumanization.

The concept that the work of art that expresses a major interest in form implies irony and humor was first exposed in Ortega's La deshumanización del arte. Ortega's ideas are very close to the aesthetics demonstrated by Robbe-Grillet in his works. In concurrence with this view is an excerpt from an article by Robbe-Grillet. It was written after the publication of Bruce Morrisette's article for the Nouvel Observateur and is now placed in the copies of Projet pour une révolution à New York distributed by Editions de Minuit. "Le jeu, plus libre encore, dont il s'agit pour nous, inventé et détruit jusqu'à ses propres règles au cours de chaque partie, d'où cette impression de 'gratuité' que ressent parfois le lecteur. Après la faillite de l'ordre divin (de la société bourgeoise) et, à sa suite, de l'ordre rationaliste

In the preceding series, the reference to La Villa Bleue at Hong-Kong is also a reference to La Maison de rendez-vous because La Villa Bleue was the basic center of the action. In the following series there is another reference to La Maison de rendez-vous. "Elle aurait pu dire, aussi bien, que c'était le lieutenant de pompiers qui la forçait à écouter ça, exprès pour lui faire peur; ou bien que c'était vous, ou moi, ou Abraham Lincoln, ou Edouard Manneret."<sup>3</sup> This series of names includes Edouard Manneret, a rather significant character who supposedly dies in La Maison de rendez-vous.

There is also a reference, perhaps unintentional, to the ciné-roman L'Immortelle in the name of a major female character in the novel. One version of the female's name in this work is Laura. The reference to a character named Franck calls to mind the novel La Jalousie because this is the name of the probable lover of the narrator's wife. In the following passage, a deliberate allusion to Le Voyeur can be readily seen. "Laura, qui a entendu les pas affolés du voyeur dévalent les marches et s'éloignant à toutes jambes le long du trottoir de droite, a éteint la lumière et s'est approchée à nouveau du judas vitré, pour surveiller la rue."<sup>4</sup>

A further development of the concept of the game is manifest in the overabundance of sadism and eroticism in this novel. On one level there are games on the more subtle level of pattern, but the objective correlative of this is game on the more obvious level. In the sadomasochistic relationship a type

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 66.

<sup>4</sup>Projet pour une révolution à New York, p. 115.

of game manifests itself in which the victim's position gives pleasure to the torturer and the victim is nothing more than a toy. The following citation demonstrates this concept. "Puis, lorsque nous passerons à l'autre face (c'est-à-dire principalement les seins, le pubis et la vulve, bien entendu), il sera préférable de vous lier solidement sur le chevalet. J'espère que vous n'aurez alors, effectivement, plus rien d'intéressant à dire, car je serai obligé de hausser au maximum le son du téléviseur, pour couvrir vos cris, si bien que je ne comprendrai plus les réponses. Ah, j'oubliais: entre les deux parties du programme, vous devrez me servir à boire et me préparer une collation: des oeufs au jambon, par exemple."<sup>5</sup>

Within the text of this novel there is no reference to this fictionality. There is no note to the reader included in the text. This does not mean, however, that there is a reversal in Robbe-Grillet's aesthetics nor a lack of interest in this aspect of the novel. There is a progression in this novel to a more sophisticated degree of technical craftsmanship in that a special note to the reader is not necessary to convey this fictionality of Projet pour une révolution à New York, because this quality is conveyed within the limits of the novel itself.

Proof of this can be seen in the very salient fact that although the title carries the name New York within it, the text contains very few references to any well-known landmarks. As it has been previously maintained, the action in this novel, as in other novels by Robbe-Grillet, takes place in a well

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<sup>5</sup>Projet pour une révolution à New York, p. 99.

defined area or a confined area. Most of what is related takes place in a room no matter who the narrator happens to be.

In Ortega's La deshumanización del arte there is the statement "to stylize is to dehumanize". One of the points of this essay is to show that the work of art changes reality and is not nor necessarily should pretend to be reality. This same view was reiterated in the article that was included in the copy of Projet pour une révolution à New York. For Robbe-Grillet it was a special kind of New York that was to be depicted. In this novel the New York to be portrayed was the New York of the subway murders, gang violence, old dirty deserted buildings, and teenage delinquents in leather jackets.<sup>6</sup>

In Robbe-Grillet's previous novel, La Maison de rendez-vous, the city of Hong-Kong was referred to frequently throughout the text. There were, however, no landmarks or detailed description of any topographical characteristics. All that is known of the town in Dans le labyrinthe is that it is a town. The country that the novel takes place in or the time in history that it occurs in is not even alluded to. The two previously cited notes to the reader regarding the author's right to depart from reality prove Robbe-Grillet's rejection of the reality myth.

Reinforcement of this concept of the fictionality of the novel is the objective correlative of the narration of the story in the narration of another story by the character named Joan Robeson in a novel that the narrator picks

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<sup>6</sup>See Robbe-Grillet's article in Le Nouvel Observateur, June 26, 1970.

up from Laura's collection. "Et arrangez-vous pour inventer des faits précis et significatifs." -- 'Oui. Je vous en supplie. Le métro. Voilà, c'est ça: le wagon de métro et la scène avec les trois blouson noirs. Ben Said se trouve, en pleine nuit, dans une voiture vide qui roule à toute allure sur une voie express, vers un quartier périphérique--Brooklyn, je crois--, l'endroit et l'heure ou il y a toujours des voyous, qui circulent d'un bout à l'autre de la rame en passant par les portes de communication, à la recherche d'un mauvais coup à faire.'" <sup>7</sup>

Reinforcement of this can be seen in the frequency of the term "reprise" and the restatement of scenes as the captive Joan Robeson changes her narration. This process can be compared to the earlier novel, *Dans le labyrinthe*, in which the word "non" appears frequently accompanied by a restatement of the action. This has been previously referred to as the narrator's changing his mind in the course of the novel and correcting himself.

The dehumanization of characters in Robbe-Grillet's novels which was treated in the third chapter of this study also applies to his latest novel, Projet pour une révolution à New York. This novel demonstrates a further dehumanization of the characters by means of stylization.

It has already been established that Robbe-Grillet's novels are fictions and that he himself affirms their fictionality. Taking this into consideration, the major characters are dehumanized by the fictionality of the work itself. Moreover, there seems to be in this novel a distinction between two groups of

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<sup>7</sup>Projet pour une révolution à New York, p. 105.



characters. The first group of characters stems from the first narration. Some of these characters are Laura, the narrator's friends at the night club "Vieux joë", and the doctor Morgan. At approximately the middle point of the novel another narrative commences within the first narration. There are some new characters introduced in this second larger narrative. Most, however, overlap from the preceding narrative. For example there is another Laura. This character could be another totally new character or a reflection of herself. It has been stated in the chapter treating the dehumanization of characters that there are fictionalized reflections of the characters in the postcards and photographs used in these works. An example of this is the character A of L'Annee dernière à Marienbad and the character A of X's photographs and attempts to persuade A of their previous relationship. The difference between this treatment of the fictionality of the character and that in Projet pour une révolution à New York is that this process is employed with more rigour than in the preceding novels treated. Keeping in mind that Joan Robeson is the character of a novel that the narrator is reading, and this second Laura is a character seen through the narrator and Laura through the first narrator, this second Laura is a reflection of herself. She is an objective correlative. She is a projection of herself just as the A of X's persuasive attempts are projections of the character A from L'Année dernière à Marienbad. Other characters of this nature are Ben Said who also appears briefly in the first narration and two characters who are designated by the letters W and M. M could also stand for Marc-Anthony or be an objective correlative of him or a completely different character. Other characters in this narration are a young girl and the teenage

boys who violate and kill her. There are, then, two degrees of humanization in this last of Robbe-Grillet's novels dependent upon the fictionality and degree of fictionality of the narratives in which they appear. There is an overlapping of the main characters in the different narrations. The first narration represents the first degree of dehumanization of the characters in this novel. The second degree of dehumanization, dependent upon the fictionality of the work, is the second narration and the characters that it contains. In spite of the fact that there is an overlapping of the characters in name, they are not the same characters with respect to their degree of fictionalization, and by extension, dehumanization.

Another element that contributes to the dehumanization of the characters is their depersonalization through brutality. Lukacs' concept of "le reification", which is the deterioration of people's interrelationship, could find its manifestation in the brutality shown by the characters in this novel. The basic pattern of dominator-dominated has been previously discussed along with the concept that this physical brutality often made the characters animalian in quality and in this way dehumanized.

This dominator-dominated, or sadistic-masochistic, relationship is most highly developed in Projet pour une révolution à New York. The projected torture of Joan Robeson or JR has already been cited. Other than this episode there is the scene of Sara's torture in the scene with the black spider. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, there is also a scene in which a young girl is violated by a group of teenage boys. Finally, there is also a scene of sacrifice of a woman by primitive natives. The element of violence that over-

flows in this novel dehumanizes the characters. This novel is especially replete with descriptions of dismembered bodies. These descriptions are no longer of people but of flesh and nothing more. The following passage is a typical description. "La victime, encore agitée de contorsions charmantes bien que déjà perdant une partie de ses forces, continue de saigner doucement aux six emplacements torturés: L'extrémité des deux pieds qui paraissent avoir été mutilés avec application, les deux seins dont le globe laiteux est intact mais veiné par tout un réseau de ruisselets rouges, qui proviennent du mamelon arraché progressivement et coulent ensuite jusqu'aux alentours des hanches et du nombril, le sexe enfin où la scie a pénétré de plus en plus à chaque mouvement convulsif de la patience. . ."<sup>8</sup>

On the level of description, a progression is also evident in Robbe-Grillet's newest novel. There are simple, less sustained objective correlatives on the object level such as the centipede from La Jalousie and the cords of the figure eight from Le Voyeur. There is a similar process in the reference to the triangular genital region of the female and the triangular shape of the slots in the machines which appear in the course of the novel. This objective correlative is vigorously pursued in the novel. It is more complex, however, because it involves not just repetition, but the interchange of two images. The other possibility is the keys which do keep repeating in the novel. These appear more often in an objective correlative of the action of dropping a set of keys.

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<sup>8</sup>Projet pour une révolution à New York, p. 185.

This is more complex than the objective correlative of an object only.

There are examples of the objective correlative on the object level which are less significant than the "cordelette" and the centipede. There is one of the repetition of red and blond hair. There are also objective correlatives of scenes; one is the dropping of keys while another is the torture situation. Yet another one is the breaking of a window. This is sustained throughout the first narrative. Thus, the basic concept of the objective correlative "à la Robbe-Grillet" has not been eliminated from Projet pour une révolution à New York. It does appear, however, to be used in this novel on the basis of a more intricate operative principle.

The very conspicuous geometric description which most critics claim to be dehumanized is less used in this novel. It is still there, occupying the first few pages, but goes no farther.

The last item to be discussed in this chapter is dehumanization as it is effected by the disappearance of the author and the narrator as we know them from Robbe-Grillet's novels. It is the contention of this author that Projet pour une révolution à New York presents the greatest degree of intricacy and development from the technical point of view. Moreover, it presents a further development of dehumanization in connection with the disappearance of the author and narrator. The skeletal structure of the narrative is in itself somewhat complicated. The novel begins with a narration in the first person. There is dialogue in this first part of the novel between the narrator and Laura, one of the principal characters in the novel. The unusual element concerning this narration and the dialogue which appears is the appearance of another

character who questions the narrator: "J'ai eu de nouveau cette impression de grande fatigue, déjà ressentie en montant l'escalier, un moment auparavant. Laura s'est endormie tout de suite dans mes bras." -- 'Pourquoi, est-elle si nerveuse? Vous comprenez que cela représente un danger supplémentaire, inutilement.' -- 'Non, dis-je, elle ne semble pas anormalement nerveuse. . .'"<sup>9</sup>

The unusual characteristic of this is that the unidentified questioner never refers to himself throughout the recit. This inquisition of the narrator punctuates the recit with no explanation or clarification. This technique then, effects the use of two narrators. It is at approximately the one quarter point of the novel that the situation is clarified: "Et ensuite qu'avez-vous fait?" -- 'Je me suis perdu dans la foule.' -- Il achève de noter ce qui l'intéresse dans le rapport que je viens de faire. Puis il lève les yeux de ses papiers et demande, sans que je voie le lien avec ce qui précède: -- 'Celle que vous appelez votre soeur était-elle à la maison à ce moment-là?' 'Oui, évidemment, puisqu'elle ne sort jamais.' -- 'Vous en êtes sûr?'<sup>10</sup>

The other half of the novel is recounted in the first person. However, the character relating the incident in the first person is a different character much of the time. The character who is the narrator for the second major narration is a character in the book that the narrator is asked to describe: "Quel genre de

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<sup>9</sup>Projet pour une révolution à New York, p. 19.

<sup>10</sup>Projet pour une révolution à New York, p. 47.

livre avait elle a la main?' -- 'Un roman policier, évidemment: il n'y a que ça à la maison, et encore en très petit nombre, si bien qu'elle relit toujours les mêmes."<sup>11</sup>

This second narration of the novel is introduced by the character who also refers to himself as "je". This second narration relates the events of a novel and the narration within a narration that the character "je" from the first part is scanning. This is the technique seen before in Robbe-Grillet's novels that is called the novel within a novel. An example of this is the novel that Franck and A relate to the husband in La Jalousie. The following marks the transition from the major narrative in which the character refers to himself as "je" to the one in which the character Joan Robeson or Robertson refers to herself as "je": "Je me réfugie à mon tour dans les pages du livre, que je feuillette en faisant mine de m'intéresser aux aventures des héros. Je crois comprendre que la belle métisse de l'image criarde s'appelle Sara."<sup>12</sup>

The narration on the part of Joan Robeson starts two pages later: "A ce moment, comme je cherche encore dans le livre, en feilletant les pages un peu au hasard, celle qui correspondrait à l'illustration, afin de vérifier les circonstances exactes de la pique et d'élucider l'aide éventuelle, ou au contraire la modification, apportée par la bestiole au programme fixe, je tombe à nouveau sur le passage où le narrateur, déguisé en policier, fait irruption

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 84.

<sup>12</sup> Projet pour une révolution à New York, p. 91.

chez la jeune femme rousse qui se fait appeler Joan."<sup>13</sup>

There are other shorter episodes narrated within these major narrations. An example of this is the recorded story presented in the first person narration by the character Laura: "Ça suffit comme ça, dit-elle, c'est toujours pareil: les pas, les cris, le verre cassé, et ils disent tout le temps la même chose." -- 'D'où est-ce qu'elle vient?' -- 'Quoi? La cassette?' -- 'Non, la bande magnétique.'<sup>14</sup>

This subordinate narration, just as was discussed in the treatment of the split narration, is taken up again a few pages later: ". . . tueuse chevelure rousse qui offre sa splendeur juste en face de moi. L'idée me traverse, aussitôt, qu'il s'agit d'un piège: le sourire trop savamment sensuel et complice de cette jeune femme tombée du ciel, sur une simple petite annonce, et qui ne m'a encore livré d'elle que son prénom. . ."<sup>15</sup>

In the previous chapter treating dehumanization with respect to the disappearance of the narrator and author from the work of art it was established that by the means of the plurality of narratives and the disintegration of the narrator the idea of one single narrator as the agent of the author is minimized. This process seems to have become far more intricate in *Projet pour une révolution à New York* than in preceding novels. A further development shows the extension of the terminology of the novel to include "narrator": "Celui-ci,

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 93.

<sup>14</sup>Projet pour une révolution à New York, p. 65.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 67.

comme il a été rapporté déjà, s'est donc introduit dans la maison du narrateur à l'heure où il croit ce dernier retenu au loin par l'exécution de Joan, condamnée par le tribunal secret . . ."<sup>16</sup>

This word appears more than once in the novel and its use contributes to the destruction of the privileged narrator. The reason for this is that the references to the narrator are to the narrator of the novel that is related by the character who refers to himself as "je". This further draws attention away from the awareness of a narrator of the first narration.

It is made very clear in this novel that the concept of the author and narrator is one of two separate entities. This can be seen in the analysis of the character "je" of the novel he is skimming: "(Je précise: personne d'autre que moi, c'est-à-dire ni Sara ni le docteur Morgan, car je me suis aperçu, dans mon rapide parcours du roman, que, des trois éléments du secret garde par l'héroïne, l'un était connu par le lecteur, le second par le narrateur lui-même, et le troisième par l'auteur du livre uniquement.)"<sup>17</sup>

Thus, the narrator is not only an object by the statement of his function. Because he is discussed by the real narrator of the first narrative, he is turned into a character-narrator. There are also shorter auxiliary narratives such as the relation of the surgeon Morgan and the short relation of what happens at the night club "Vieux Joé". The important characteristic of the narration as a whole in this novel is that not only are there narratives made by people, but

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<sup>16</sup>Projet pour une révolution à New York, p. 201.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 92.



also by inhuman entities. The second large narration on the part of the character Joan Robeson of the novel is a narration by a nonhuman entity because Joan is a character in a fictional work. There are also narratives by machines in the recordings that Laura keeps, for example. In this case it could be said that the machine does the narrating. It is of interest to note that the last part of the novel is particularly characterized by very abrupt transitions to many different and divergent narrated events. This is achieved by the abrupt changes and the signaling of the shift by the term "coupure".

Thus, in recapitulation, there is in this novel further intricacy of the diffusion of the narrator by the continuation of the polyphony of plots related by the narrators. Coupled with this is the plurality of narrators and the non-human quality of the narrators of the minor narratives. These are essentially that of the recording belonging to Laura whose narrator is unknown and that of the woman Joan Robeson or Robertson who is captured in the novel. She is not really a woman, but a character. Thus, the polyphony of plot and plurality of narrating elements coupled with the plurality of function of all the narrators destroys the image of the single narrator within the novel.

This does not mean that there is no narrator to the novel. It does mean, however, that the concept of an all-powerful, all-knowing one is gone.

"Ils ont l'air incertains, fatigués. M décolle un instant son masque, d'un geste machinal, pour tenter d'effacer avec le plat de sa main les plis de son vrai visage, par-dessous; et Morgan, qui lève alors les yeux des paperasses accumulées sur la table reconnaît avec stupefaction les traits du narrateur.

Sans hésiter, me voyant découvert. . . Coupure."<sup>18</sup> In connection with the dissimulation of the narrator is the fact that these terms imply a quick transition. The work "coupure" is used toward the end of the narration, but parallels the use of the term "reprise" used by the narrator-character Joan Robeson in the novel. This is very similar to Robbe-Grillet's novel Dans le labyrinthe, in which the word "non" throughout the passage implies a correction of false starts on the part of the narrator. The greater degree of intricacy and the use of this technique appears in the more recent novel, Projet pour une révolution à New York. This is because two different words are used in two different narrations. It is made even more complex by the dialogue between the narrator who refers to himself as "je" and another character, quite possibly Morgan, in taking the previously quoted passage into account. This further dehumanizes the novel from the point of view of the dissimulation of the narrator because it divides the narrator and creates what really amounts to two separate narratives. One relates an incident and the other is dialogue in the present concerning the relation of that incident. This dialogue within the narration physically split it by its embodiment in two different characters of narrator and inquisitor.

This split in the narrator further places in question the categorization of characters in novelistic criticism. Robbe-Grillet stated his questioning of the literary terms applied to the novel in an article previously referred to. Joan Robeson is a character of the first narration and a narrator of the next major one.

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<sup>18</sup>Projet pour une révolution à New York, pp. 213-214.

The other character questioning the narrator is a narrator-character. The main purpose of the use of these combined terms is to reiterate the fact that these functions overlap.

The diffusion of the author occurs essentially through the same operative principle as that of the diffusion of the narrator. The most basic step in the disappearance of the author from the work is the separation of the author from the narrator. These certainly can be two different entities, and the passage previously cited shows that Robbe-Grillet had this in mind. (See p. 150, Note 16).

The term lyrical was defined in the previous chapter concerning the disappearance of the author from the work as the expression of personal feelings or a personal world-vision. This concept is also present in Projet pour une révolution à New York in a more intricate state. This, however, is dependent upon the plurality of narrators in the novel. "Je" does not stand for one single person at all and the shifts in narration are easily identifiable in the text. First, the subject word "I" in these narratives does not refer to an author nor does it have to. The author and the narrator are two separate entities. There is no lyrical quality to the subject "je" because it does not reveal the emotions of the author as it does in a novel such as Benjamin Constant, where the narrator is supposed to be the same person as the author.

The other quality that renders the narrative "je" of Projet pour une révolution à New York non-lyrical is the fact that little or no emotion is exposed in the novel, that the accounts are not told on the emotional level. The interrelation between the characters is so superficial that it could be said

that there is none. The plurality of narratives and the fact that "je" has a different meaning than it traditionally does implies that the "je" in Projet pour une révolution à New York means several characters referring to themselves. These are not people, they are fully and admittedly fictional entities. If the interpretation of La Maison de rendez-vous by Jean Alter is negative, then the first character "je" is also fictional.

Furthermore, the narration of the last few pages seems to contain a narrator that is a possible taperecorder with the quick changes of scene preceded by the term "coupure". The part of the novel narrated by the recording further negates the concept of lyricism because what "je" stands for is unknown. The main negation of lyricism is that "je" does not represent a human entity. It is a machine that says "je".

Looking at the totality of Robbe-Grillet's work, from the earlier novels through Projet pour une révolution à New York, a definite progression can be seen. Projet pour une révolution à New York contains nothing totally innovative with respect to the preceding novels. Everything in this novel has its seeds in earlier works. The process of dehumanization in Robbe-Grillet's novels has remained a constant factor throughout the novel and what has been exposed in Projet pour une révolution à New York has only shown a greater degree of intricacy and sophistication on several levels such as the plurality of narratives and polyphony of plot.

## CONCLUSION

A look at Robbe-Grillet's works in perspective shows this author to be in the mainstream of current literary trends. Robbe-Grillet's world is the twentieth century where man has built a wall around himself by his own technological superiority and supreme faith in it.

He is a direct heir of Samuel Beckett and yet at the same time his antithesis. For Beckett's characters are physically dehumanized in that they are mobile corpses. Robbe-Grillet's characters are aesthetically dehumanized in works that reflect the concept of dehumanization. Robbe-Grillet is Beckett's antithesis because he does not see man as a skeleton of himself. For Robbe-Grillet, dehumanization does not call for the death of man, but for the death of man's conceit. That is to say that man cannot expect to find universal truth or reality within himself only. Man should look out from himself and become part of the universe, but before he can do this, he must think of himself as a part of the universe and not the center of it as André Niel would say.

As it has been previously shown, dehumanization means several things. With respect to description, it does mean having a lack of human qualities as the early critics of Robbe-Grillet's novels hasten to state. The dehumanized descriptive technique, however, does not mean that Robbe-Grillet considers humanity in the abstract sense as fit for annihilation. The term does not have

to connote a derogatory view of man as so many critics have inferred from Robbe-Grillet. This word dehumanization is not the opposite equivalent of humanism. The word in itself does not have to imply any view of man at all.

There is an aesthetic meaning of the word dehumanization as was first used by José Ortega y Gasset in La deshumanización del arte. Chapter I points out several basic aesthetic concepts that are connected with Robbe-Grillet's aesthetics as well. The similarity of views in both men made evident in this chapter has a great significance with respect to aesthetics.

First, it considers the masses hostile to dehumanized art. It also advocates a change in the perspective from which one views reality. Most important is the fact that dehumanization in both men's aesthetics marks a break with the concept that the work of art must imitate reality. It gives the artist or author freedom by liberating from him the "myth of reality".

The major element of consequence in this dissertation that has been found from the investigation of dehumanization is that it is not a negative term but a constructive one applying not only to Robbe-Grillet but much of twentieth century French literature. Dehumanization is a term that can and should be applied to Robbe-Grillet's novels. It is a term understood by and very applicable to modern man.

Robbe-Grillet is also relevant to all times in that his works constitute a unity when they are treated as an ensemble. He is innovative and continually questions the traditional.

Dehumanization is a new theme particular to the twentieth century, yet it has seeds that extend back much further. Just as Robbe-Grillet the novelist

is so exemplary of contemporary man in one way and yet so catholic in another, he has placed himself in very contemporary trends in his own fashion, joining his contemporaries in stating that man is losing his human qualities, that he is dehumanized. He is among the greatest of these contemporaries in that he uses dehumanization with a new type of humanism as a goal. This is not an anthropocentric humanism, but a cosmological humanism which sees a whole new future for man.

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## VITA

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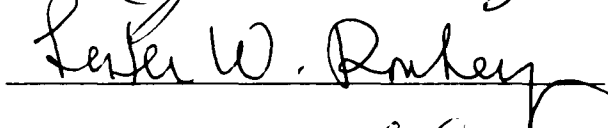
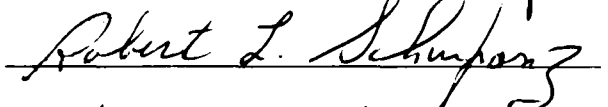
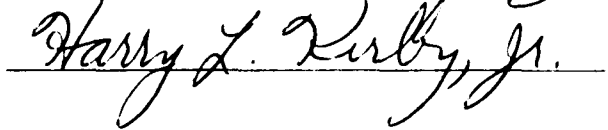
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